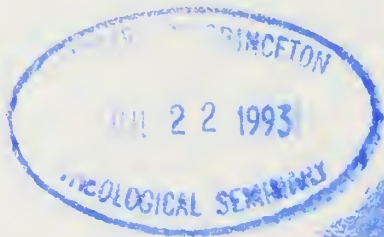




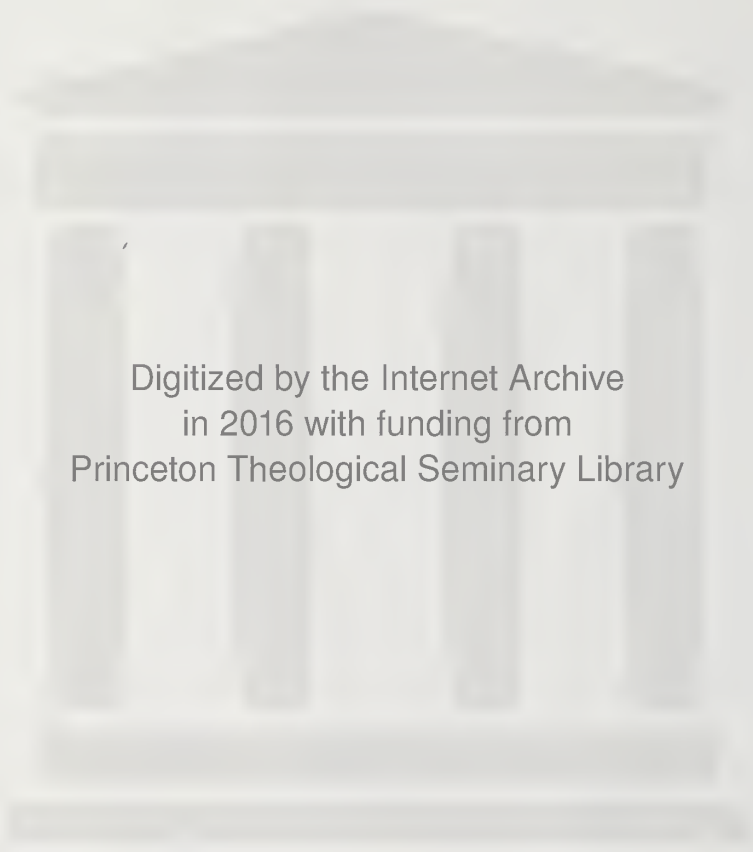
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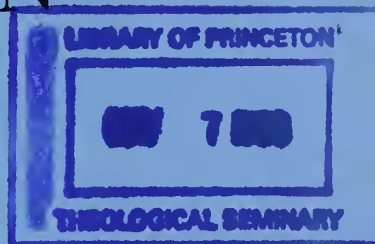


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# THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

VOLUME X, NUMBER 1 NEW SERIES 1989



OPENING CONVOCATION, FALL 1988  
Parish Ministry in Times of Political Conflict

D. ALAN MAKER

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SERMON  
Why Are We Here?

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For Jonathan's Sake: The Morality of Memory

MICHAEL ERIC DYSON

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Daniel L. Migliore, EDITOR

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*Editor*

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CN 821

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# Parish Ministry in Times of Political Conflict

by D. ALAN MAKER

*Minister of St. Columba's Presbyterian Church in Johannesburg, South Africa, Alan Maker received his D.Min. degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. He served as moderator of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1984. This address was presented in Miller Chapel on September 18, 1988.*

Opening Convocation, Fall 1988

I WANT YOU to travel with me in your imagination to South Africa, a lovely and complex country, some of whose problems and complexities you will know if not understand.

The day is cloudless, the sky the deep blue of the high veld, a mile above sea level. We leave the bustling, modern city of Johannesburg, drive through a light industrial area between the mine dumps, and then across some empty land to Diepkloof, one of the many suburbs of Soweto—a very African-sounding name, but simply an abbreviation of “southwestern townships.”

The roads are unpaved, rough, and uneven. Garbage hasn't been collected for some time so it stands high in foul-smelling piles. The basic houses have four rooms. Some have been modified and look quite comfortable; some have shacks in their yards, hired out to help pay the rent; some have small businesses in the yards—barbershops, repair shops for cars, or stoves, or refrigerators; many are surrounded by fences.

Hundreds of people amble along the streets; children play on the roadside verges; taxis race, putting the fear of God into all and sundry.

The purpose of our visit is to be present at the funeral of a young man killed by the security forces somewhere in the Northern Transvaal. His father is a friend of mine, an elder in the Diepkloof congregation. The young minister, only a few months out of seminary, is nervous about conducting the funeral, so he has asked a colleague and me to help him. Such a funeral is a great event in the townships. Crowds of people attend, most of whom would never have known the deceased, but they stand with him for the cause for which he has died. The authorities have limited the numbers at such funerals to two hundred.

As we get nearer the church we pass mourners walking to the service. Outside the church we discover in the narrow street four large troop carriers filled with black police officers, a smaller yellow carrier, and a vehicle fitted with an ugly piece of equipment called a sneeze-machine—for dispensing tear gas.

Inside the church the coffin is draped with the flag of the African National Congress. The family sits tensely in a few pews. The rest of the building is filled with young men and women belonging to militant organizations called Comrades of Young Lions—they behave impeccably throughout.

Endless speeches are made, the grandmother prays between body-shaking sobs, the police peer in at the windows, and the young people ask me to get them to leave the church premises; to my surprise I succeed. The leader of the Comrades marches to the front of the church to make his speech, his clenched fist raised, and as he walks he cries, “Viva Mandela; viva ANC; viva S.A. Communist party.” The atmosphere is electrically charged; amid the grief of the family there is anger and fear, probably even some bravado.

I walk ahead of the hearse as it makes its way down the dusty road, and the sirens of the police vehicles blare out an unholy death march. As I walk I wonder why no one told me at college that I would have to do this when I became a minister!

Time to move off. We drive out of Diepkloof, successfully avoiding children and taxis, right across Johannesburg to the eastern suburbs. The roads are all paved; the houses, set in large gardens, are surrounded by high walls; few people walk in the streets. We drive through imposing school gates, past tennis courts, into magnificent grounds, shaded by giant old trees, toward a lovely colonial-style building.

In the chapel, all neat and clean, sit people tidily in rows, dressed immaculately, waiting for the bride. I have to conduct a wedding here—the scene is one of gentility and beauty and orderliness, peacefulness and calm. We have traveled something like twenty kilometers, but we might as well have gone from one planet to another.

Far away in the Eastern Cape, a young black man, only twenty-two years of age, began his ministry. Dorrington, the township where he worked, like many others throughout the country, has been wracked with conflict—factions fighting one another, the security forces active, criminals taking advantage of the chaos to settle old scores. Patrick Mafa went out to visit some of his people, and when he returned he found his house burned to the ground. No one has yet discovered who was responsible, but all he possessed was destroyed, most especially the books that he had collected during his studies.

I wrote to him offering him a new posting in an area not quite so politically volatile, and he answered me, “You have appointed me here, these are my people. I want to stay.” I wonder how well the seminary prepared him for that situation.

Basic ministry in any congregation anywhere is probably very similar. We

baptize, we teach young people and adults, we perform wedding ceremonies, we counsel the distressed, we bury the dead. But beyond all that, our people are often dehumanized by structures, economic and political. We may well find that as ministers we have to confront powerful authorities on behalf of our people in the name of Jesus Christ.

Conflict, corruption, and oppression do not belong only to the third world. On my first visit to the United States in 1969, I stayed with a minister who had had to appear in court in the morning on behalf of one of his young people who had refused to serve in Vietnam, and in the afternoon of the same day had to go with weeping parents to meet the body of their son killed in action.

I have been told often enough that where racial discrimination in housing still exists in these United States, it is because the local churches have not done their job. This indicates that at least some expect us to be involved in issues of social justice; others wish that we would keep our mouths shut.

I have been called everything from the illegitimate child of a communist to a right-wing reactionary. All name calling is irrelevant provided that I know who I am and why I am involved where I am.

Some want us to believe that all we have to do is meet the spiritual needs of the people, and they will define that as preparing them for a place in heaven. They tell us that if people would only put on Christ, all our social problems would simply disappear. Carlyle Marney, in one of his sermons, quotes a man appointed to a leading position in the Baptist denomination as saying that if everyone in the United States were converted and decided at once to join the Baptists we would still have the same problems the following day. It would make no difference if they became Presbyterians.

Our ministry is to the whole person, and we have to prepare ourselves for such a mission by knowing something at least about the dynamics of people at work or play, in family and community life. It is useful to know how Augustus Caesar and Herod Agrippa ran the affairs of their kingdoms; it is also important to understand how Ronald Reagan and Rockefeller operate theirs.

The Christian has a commitment—to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, *and* to Christ's program of love in the world. You cannot have one without the other, and that assertion has behind it not the support of an isolated biblical text, but the weight of the whole Bible.

I owe to Ernest Campbell the conviction that the doctrine of creation is the most important in the faith. The sublime second story of creation in Genesis 2 has for me always spoken of God's intention for creation rather

than his method. That has led me to the conviction that God's intention is to establish what Whitehead calls the "manifold harmony."

Let me put it this way: at the very center of the universe there beats a heart of love, which has expressed itself in creation. To the crown of creation, humanity, God gave the freedom to accept or reject that love. Humanity has used and abused that love to bring to the world disharmony and hurt, and the remainder of the biblical narrative tells of God's effort to restore creation—to get us back into the garden.

The church is the body of Christ—the second Adam, the one who lived the life of the garden outside it—so its function then is to make the heartbeat of love at the center of the universe both audible and credible. It is to this task that you and I have been called.

But the heartbeat is a very fragile sound; it can so easily be obscured. A parent holds the body of a little baby; a wife stands at the bedside of her husband broken with cancer; a teenager struggles to cope with the marital arguments of her parents; an executive receives notification of redundancy; a family battles to work through disloyalty or conflict; a businessperson after a lifetime of hard work goes bankrupt; and the sound of the heartbeat of love is stilled to their ears.

But there is more. Structures and administrative policies can blot out the sound as well, as so often happens in my own country. A breadwinner cannot find work to feed the family because freedom of movement is prohibited by law; a young person is forced to endure an inferior education that simply will not be adequate either for university or for the job market; a family cannot find a house because the Group Areas Act forbids its buying in certain places even if the money is available.

People move into the city from the country areas, build their shelters, ugly and unhygienic maybe, but home, and authorities rather than try to help these squatters, destroy their shelters and often their pitifully few belongings.

Apartheid, on one level, is one of the many ideologies thought up by human beings to oppress others, but it has severe theological implications when, in a so-called Christian country, official policy subverts the proclamation of the Christian gospel. Dare Christians be silent in the face of this? Mordecai speaks to us as clearly today as he did to Esther: "For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Est. 4:14).



What then are we to do? How can we help to make that heartbeat of love audible and credible in such a world as ours? The second Adam spoke of his program that day in the synagogue in Nazareth, and we have no right to alter it: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk. 4:18-19).

We spiritualize this at our peril. For example, what is good news to the poor? Surely not that after this struggle there is a special place reserved for you in heaven. That's a dirty joke. Good news is a roof over your head, food in your stomach, medical attention for your ailments, education for your children.

Let us not be guilty of romanticizing the poor either—they too need to hear the good news, they too need to repent and accept Christ's claim on their lives, but they will not hear it while their poverty goes unattended by wealthy, self-righteous Christians.

When we go to our congregations we shall stand with the people in times of personal stress and grief, but also when the structures of society threaten to destroy their humanity, and they will only begin to hear that heartbeat of love when somebody loves them. For people are basically simple; they need to see and experience concrete actions, visible signs of invisible reality.

And so as ministers we shall stand at the graveside with grieving parents, spouses, children, and friends and help them to cope; we shall bring strength to the sick and those who watch over them by our presence in hospitals and at home; we shall bring hope to families by the sensitive use of our counseling skills; we shall bring new insights to those searching for meaning through our sermons and education programs; and through every act of kindness will shine the light of the kingdom.

We shall be called to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the poor, who seem always to congregate at the church's door, challenging it to respond. But we shall also have to fight for fair and just economic and political structures, not because we are Republican or Democrat, socialist or capitalist, but because so often these structures trap people in their hunger, nakedness, and poverty. As Martin Luther King reminded us so vividly, "I cannot make a law to force you to love me, but I can make a law to prevent you from lynching me, and that is something."

At the end of the day we shall not be judged by whether we have been ministers of large or small congregations, obtained numerous degrees or public recognition, achieved status as moderators or bishops, but on whether

through our ministry God has been able to bring some harmony to his garden, on whether through our faithfulness we have been transparent to the second Adam, or whether through our acts of grace and love some have been able to hear again that faint heartbeat of love at the very center of all that is.



# Imitation of Christ: Is It Possible in the Twentieth Century?

by MARGARET R. MILES

*Margaret R. Miles is Bussey Professor of Historical Theology at Harvard Divinity School. This essay is part of her most recent book, *Practicing Christianity: Critical Perspectives for an Embodied Spirituality* (Crossroad, 1988), and was originally presented as one of the Stone Lectures at Princeton Seminary in March 1988.*

THE CARE and cultivation of an interior life have fascinated human beings for many centuries. Certainly, human life contains an irreducibly high instance of gratuitous conditions and events, but the possibility of shaping one's subjectivity and one's life in society within the wider parameter of the unpredictable—variously named as fate, the will of God, luck, or simply “life”—continues to intrigue thoughtful people. Socrates may have overstated his plea for self-awareness and conscious choice when he said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” But the alternative—reliance on the social conditioning provided by one's culture—has frequently been experienced as confining or even dangerous.

In order to live a Christian life, one must first imagine such a life, must visualize what it might look like, might feel like. In the history of Christianity, metaphors have been a primary device for providing a setting and lending vividness to the ideas and practices that embody Christian life. Metaphors govern understanding by suggesting that an unknown and ineffable entity—life—can best be understood as an activity one knows something about—pilgrimage, for example. This comparison of an unknown to a known entity, Sallie McFague writes, is “the way language and more basically, thought works.”<sup>1</sup>

In the twentieth century, for example, the metaphor of revolutionary struggle informs the Christian practice of thousands of base communities in Central and South America. In Christianity understood as revolutionary struggle, people worship, pray, study scripture, and participate in sacraments in order to achieve the communal solidarity and empowerment necessary for acting in society to bring about political change. A generation ago, another metaphor, the metaphor of exodus—God's leading of an oppressed people to freedom—informed the deeply religious civil rights movement in the United States. Both of these metaphors—revolutionary struggle and exodus—highlight engagement and action, vigorous participation in the pub-

<sup>1</sup> Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 37.

lic world of politics and society. Before the twentieth century, metaphors usually focused less on struggle against unjust social arrangements and oppressive governments than on individual struggle to renounce the social world. Society and the "transient" rewards of the social world have frequently been understood as enemies of a Christian life.

# I

How were metaphors of Christian life circulated in the historical societies of the Christian West? A voluminous literature of manuals of instruction in the practice of Christianity—self-help manuals—existed: *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Erasmus's *Enchiridion of the Christian Soldier*, the nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox manual *The Way of a Pilgrim*, and Francis de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life*, to name only a few. Before the printing press was invented at the end of the fifteenth century, advice on how to live a Christian life was given in sermons, catechetical instruction, religious drama, and hymns as well as in hand-copied texts. It was in devotional manuals, however, that metaphors of Christian life were most thoroughly and extensively articulated.

Perhaps the most frequently developed traditional metaphor of Christian life is that it is essentially an imitation of Christ. Interpretations of precisely what it meant to imitate Christ varied widely, however, from St. Francis of Assisi's stigmata, a literal participation in the suffering of the crucified Christ, to less flamboyant imitations of the virtues of Christ's life and ministry.

Devotional manuals advocated the imitation of Christ on the basis of the scriptural statement that human beings were created in the image of God. If humanity was made in God's image, they reasoned, the actualization of human nature lies in developing this similarity to the divine. Likeness to God was lost in the sin of Adam and Eve, however, so that all that remains is the faint image. Nevertheless, the image is built in, indestructible, a life-long characteristic of human beings. Thus, although the image of God cannot be effaced, it cannot be developed without divine help because of its badly warped condition. Patristic authors like Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa used the image of a damaged painting to describe the state of the image in sinful humanity; Christ, because of his love for humanity, became himself an "image of the invisible God."<sup>2</sup> Christ revealed, in living flesh,

<sup>2</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward Hardy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, Library of Christian Classics, 1974), p. 68.

what God is so that human beings could see, in this translation of divinity into body, the possibility of rehabilitation—as one restores an old and damaged painting to freshness of line and vividness of color—the image of God in oneself.

But perplexingly diverse interpretations of what it means to imitate Christ appear in instructional manuals in the practice of Christianity. We will explore several representative descriptions: Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*, Gregory of Nyssa's *On Perfection*, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, and the illustrated fourteenth-century manuscript *Meditations on the Life of Christ*. Each urges the imitation of Christ but describes the practices informing such an imitation very differently.

## II

*The Imitation of Christ* was the most popular devotional text of the fifteenth century and one of the most popular manuals in the history of Christianity. It was written by a monk, Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471), who participated in the late medieval popular religious movement the *Devotio Moderna*, or New Devotion. Although it was founded by monks of the Brethren of the Common Life under the direction of Gerhard Groote (1340–1384), the New Devotion quickly became a lay movement, inspiring gatherings of hundreds of groups of people in the Netherlands and eventually reaching into southern Europe—the “base communities” of the fifteenth century. Motivated by the then-novel idea that life in the world did not necessarily exclude one from being a real Christian but could become itself a spiritual discipline, the New Devotion had no vows. The movement was simultaneously a rejection of the “full-time” model of Christian practice, a denial that one could only engage in a complete religious life in the setting of a monastery or convent, and an attempt to describe what a different kind of full-time engagement in Christian life might look like for people who worked, loved, and lived “in the world.” Members were expected to continue their accustomed lives, informed by communal study and discussion of scripture and prayer. Education was important to the movement, and free education accompanied the spread of the New Devotion. The revolutionary potential of the idea of an ordinary life as spiritual discipline is attested by the rapid growth of the movement. By shaping the inner life of the individual around meditation on the life and passion of Christ, the imitation of Christ could be achieved in the midst of the most demanding of secular lives.

From *The Imitation of Christ* we can gain some understanding of how an unaccustomed pressure was brought to bear on individuals in order to create a new relation "of the self to the self," a new relation of the individual to the group, and a new sense of relationship to God. The New Devotion represented, in its own time, a skillful reconstruction of the "self," an intensification of Christian life that *produced* the "self" it addressed. In *The Imitation*, the individual is no longer seen as primarily a social entity, gripped by conditioning, limited by economic and political restraints, but as a unique self constituted by listening and speaking to God. The forceful pressure on the individual to exchange her or his "natural" predilections toward a comfortable life for a life focused on relationship to God was balanced by the support and counsel of a group of similarly engaged people.

Thomas à Kempis defines the imitation of Christ as a meditation on the inner life of Jesus. By meditation, one's life begins to conform to "the pattern of Christ's life." Since the inner life of the historical Jesus is not readily accessible, and since Thomas does not, in *The Imitation*, exegete the Gospels for suggestions about Jesus' inner life, Thomas's translation of Jesus' inner life into attitudes, practices, and lifestyles was dependent on two sources: Christian tradition—especially the monastic devotional tradition of which he was a part—and his own experience in cultivating a Christian life.

Much of the advice of *The Imitation* is not congenial to twentieth-century people. Thomas à Kempis spoke in violent imagery of "crushing one's natural feelings," of "killing the old impulses"; he names as enemies the passions, emotions, desires, and even one's own body. "The highest and most profitable form of study is to understand one's inmost nature and despise it," he wrote. This rhetoric attempts to demonstrate the value of a chosen, consciously shaped, cultivated Christian life in contrast to a life thoroughly programmed by cultural conditioning. Thomas's use of the word "natural" also needs careful interpretation: in context he seems to mean that feelings that seem to appear "naturally" are not to be regarded as either inevitable or normative, but can be changed.

Twentieth-century people, many of whom have learned that one's socialization or cultural conditioning is frequently inadequate and confining, and have set out to change habitual responses, can perhaps understand Thomas à Kempis's project even if the violence of his language makes us recoil and the enemies he names are not our perceived enemies. Anyone who has tried to change her conditioning in order to cultivate a richer life, a wider repertoire of responses to people and events, and a greater energy for love and



work knows both how difficult it is to change settled habits, attitudes, and feelings *and* that it can be done. Reading Thomas à Kempis with a hermeneutic of generosity requires that we bring to his advice the experience we have that matches the sense of intensity and urgency we get from his rhetoric.<sup>3</sup>

### III

Much more could be said about *The Imitation of Christ*, and we will return to this enormously popular manual. Our purpose is first to recover a range of historical interpretations of what it meant to understand Christian life as an imitation of Christ. St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395) was a bishop in Cappadocia, the brother of St. Basil and friend of St. Gregory Nazianzus. The influence of his thought on the Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches has been profound. Gregory considered spiritual perfection—or deification—to be the goal of Christian life and to be attainable in this world by the earnest seeker. Deification is the doctrine that human beings can, through liturgy, participation in the sacraments, and devotional piety share in the divine energy brought into the world of human experience by the incarnation of Christ. Although intellectual knowledge of God beyond what has been revealed in scripture is not possible for human beings, through human cooperation with God—synergy—full participation in the divine energy of love is a present possibility for Christians.

Gregory of Nyssa's definition of the imitation of Christ appears in his treatise *On Perfection*. Human beings, created in God's image, can learn by imitation of Christ—who participated fully in both the divine and the human realms—how to actualize the image of God. Gregory lists the attributes of Christ, analyzing them into two categories: those that human beings can imitate, and those that cannot be imitated and must simply be worshipped:

The marks of the true Christian are all those we know in connection with Christ. Those that we have capacity for we imitate, and those which our nature does not approximate by imitation, we reverence and worship. Thus, it is necessary for the Christian life to illustrate all the interpretive terms signifying Christ, some through imitation, others through worship.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> I do not use the word "rhetoric" in a pejorative sense; I indicate by it simply the style and emotional quality of an author's effort to persuade.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *On Perfection*, trans. in Hardy, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, p. 99.

Gregory further divides Christ's attributes into two kinds: attributes associated with wisdom, and those associated with power. Both kinds of attributes are accessible to Christians. Christ as peace, as light, as redemption, as life, and as spiritual nourishment makes the reality of these characteristics available to the one who bears Christ's name. Gregory's proposal for the imitation of Christ, then, focuses on scriptural—especially Pauline—accounts of Christ's wisdom and power, and the Christian's realization that his participation in Christ's life and body permits him to share Christ's attributes. Gregory carefully limits his account of the imitation of Christ to what is revealed in scripture, abstaining from "theories concerning the divine nature."<sup>5</sup>

Gregory's method is scholarly and biblical—but it is also passionate. Yet Gregory names the passions as the factor of human life that is most likely to alienate the Christian from God. Why write a passionate treatise about the evil of the passions? Why understand Christ as "passionless," and the source of passionlessness in contradiction to gospel accounts of Christ's anger, sadness, and compassion? A partial answer to these questions lies in an enriched understanding of the Greek word *apatheia*.

*Apatheia* is an extraordinarily difficult word to translate, and the English word "passionlessness" is a misleading translation in terms of twentieth-century connotations. *Apatheia* took different nuances of meaning from the different contexts in which it was used, and can mean lack of feeling, or insensibility, freedom from emotion, detachment and tranquility, or—as frequently in Gregory's usage—freedom from sin.<sup>6</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa's *On Perfection* presents a design for a particular kind of Christian life, that of an educated intellectual, skilled in study and contemplation, a life characterized by "intellectual beauty" in which there is no "civil war" between body and soul. By identifying distractions from one's chosen life as caused by "passions," Gregory did not intend to preclude integrated passion. Indeed, as a Christian Platonist he understood that all intellectual endeavor must be motivated by an original passionate interest in the world of the senses.<sup>7</sup> However, passion that remains stuck on the surface of the sensible world, passionate interest that cannot move more deeply into sensual objects in order to contemplate their origin in the intelligible world (for the Platonist), or (for the Christian) their creator, becomes the enemy of

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 170ff.

<sup>7</sup> Plato, *Symposium* 210a; also *Phaedrus* 251a, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

the cultivated life. It is important to notice that it is not the sensible world itself that is dangerous or threatening, but the inability of the passionate lover of sensual objects to move beyond their surfaces into contemplation of the implications of their existence.

## IV

A third conception of what it meant to imitate Christ is that of St. Francis of Assisi (1181 or 1182–1226), who introduced into Christian tradition what is perhaps the most dramatic interpretation of the imitation of Christ. St. Francis was the first saint reputed to have received the stigmata, a “marvelous imprint of the passion of Christ in his flesh,” an event witnessed and reported by his disciple and friend, Brother Leo.<sup>8</sup>

Francis’s distinctive practice of Christianity was organized around the poverty, humility, powerlessness, and vulnerability of the historical Jesus: “He was always thinking about Jesus,” his first biographer wrote; “Jesus was in his mouth, in his ears, in his eyes, in his hands; Jesus was in his whole being.”<sup>9</sup> Although Francis’s physical participation in the crucifixion of Christ was only one result of his long imitation of Christ’s life and ministry, the stigmata have, understandably, received a greater share of attention than his less dramatic daily imitation of Christ.

The late fourteenth-century *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, a compilation of earlier documents, reports Brother Leo’s account of Francis’s stigmatization. As Francis was praying in a solitary place on Mt. Alverna, he experienced a vision of Christ in which he conversed with Christ at length. When the vision disappeared,

it left a most intense ardor and flame of divine love in the heart of St. Francis, and it left a marvelous image and imprint of the Passion of Christ in his flesh. For soon there began to appear in the hands and feet of St. Francis the marks of nails such as he had just seen in the body of Jesus Crucified, who had appeared to him in the form of a Seraph. For his hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the center with nails, the heads of which were in the palms of his hands and in the upper part of his feet outside the flesh, and their points extended through the back of the hands and the soles of the feet. . . . Likewise in his right side appeared the wound of a blow from a spear, which was

<sup>8</sup> *Acts of St. Francis and His Companions*, in *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas of Celano, *First Life*, in Habig, *St. Francis*, p. 329.

open, red, and bloody, and from which blood often issued from the holy breast of St. Francis.<sup>10</sup>

The enormous popularity of St. Francis in his own time guaranteed that his version of the imitation of Christ became one of the marks of sainthood in the Christian West for the next several centuries. Francis's celebrated love for—and power over—the natural world, his embrace of poverty in a time of steadily increasing commercialism, and his frequent visions and ecstatic states made him the most popular saint of all time in the Christian West. Over the centuries between Francis's time and our own, many have claimed that they received the stigmata from Christ, including Catherine of Genoa, Gertrud of Delft, Veronica Giuliani, and Therese Neumann (d. 1962); Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila claimed to have invisible—but painful—stigmata. Even today, outside North America, there are reported cases of stigmatization that have a wide popular following.

## V

The illustrated devotional manual *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, dating from the end of the thirteenth century, gives yet another interpretation of the imitation of Christ, the final one we will examine before discussing the present usefulness of each of these models. As in St. Francis's interpretation, it is the humanity of Christ that the anonymous author urges the reader to imitate. The imitation of Christ advocated in the text and pictured in the illustrations, however, is not the colorful and extreme practices of St. Francis, but a devotion more adapted to the daily lives of ordinary people. Here the imitation of Christ is described as a deeply felt empathy with Christ and with the scriptural characters who surrounded Christ during his life on earth.

The necessary condition for feeling with the scriptural figures, the *Meditations* says, is to imagine oneself participating as an actor or an observer in the events of Christ's life; the necessary condition, in short, is "being there": "If you wish to profit you must be present at the same things that it is related that Christ did and said, joyfully and rightly, leaving behind all other cares and anxieties."<sup>11</sup>

It is not enough simply to recall a verbal story, however; one must also

<sup>10</sup> *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, ed. Raphael Brown (New York: Doubleday/Image, 1958), pp. 192–93.

<sup>11</sup> *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript*, ed. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 5.



place oneself in a visual setting. As another author, contemporary with the author of the *Meditations*, wrote, images

move the mind more than descriptions; for deeds are placed before the eyes in paintings and thus appear to be actually carrying on. But in description, the deed is done as it were by hearsay, which affects the mind less when recalled to memory. Hence, also, it is that in churches we pay less reverence to books than to images and to pictures.<sup>12</sup>

Since the goal of the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* was to render scenes from the life of Christ vivid, the best way to accomplish this immediacy was to aid the visual imagination of the reader.<sup>13</sup> Illustrations for every narrative were planned for the manuscript of the *Meditations*.<sup>14</sup> With simple but eloquent gestures, the figures in these drawings express their deep devotion to Jesus. Their relationship to Christ is presented as the model for all Christians.

## VI

Interpretation of what it means to imitate Christ has covered a wide range of conceptual schemes, attitudes, and practices—from imitation as primarily a physical and literal imitation of Christ's suffering to intellectual cultivation of the attributes and characteristics of Christ. After identifying some emphases that these instructions have in common—emphases I take to be representative of the literature of Christian devotion—we will consider whether the metaphor of the imitation of Christ seems usable and fruitful in the nuclear world.

A common theme in treatises that use imitation of Christ as their dominant metaphor is the creation and development of a self organized and unified by the practice of Christianity. "Keep watch on yourself, rouse yourself, remind yourself, and whatever happens to others, do not take your attention from yourself," *The Imitation of Christ* urges.<sup>15</sup> The fourteenth-century Dominican preacher and mystic Meister Eckhart wrote, "Begin, therefore, with yourself, and forget yourself."<sup>16</sup> The ambiguous use of the term trans-

<sup>12</sup> Durandus of Mende, *Rationale divinorum officiorum* 3.4.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> In the manuscript edited by Ragusa and Green, however, the sequence of pictures ends during the accounts of Christ's ministry.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Betty I. Knott (London: Collins, 1963), p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> Meister Eckhart, "Talks," in *Meister Eckhart, A Modern Translation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1941), p. 5.

lated "self" in contemporary English usage is puzzling until we recognize that the "self" cultivated by religious practices is not the socialized self, crusty with habits, embedded in a society that shapes and conditions desire around available and approved objects and lifestyles. Rather, the self identified and strengthened in religious practice is the self in relationship to God. The goal of the practice of Christianity is to make *this* self strong enough to form the center around which the whole personality can be organized so that, as Gregory of Nyssa put it, the two aspects of the person, body and soul, can become one, and a "harmony of dissonant parts" can be achieved.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to remember that the imitation of Christ is not, even when contemplation is its major tool, simply a conceptual orientation or a mental attitude. The concreteness with which the metaphor is to be actualized, the precise practical instructions that enable imitation of Christ, is demonstrated by the care with which authors of devotional manuals describe them. The self does not become a unity by imagining itself so, but by acting in a unified way in hundreds of large and small ways every day. Michel Foucault's description of the philosophical "care of the self" in the first Christian centuries could equally well describe the agenda of most devotional manuals throughout the Christian centuries:

It is important to understand that this application to oneself does not require simply a general attitude, an unfocused attention. The term *epimeleia* [cultivation] designates not just a preoccupation but a whole set of occupations. . . . The time is not empty; it is filled with exercises, practical tasks, various activities. Taking care of oneself is not a rest cure.<sup>18</sup>

Manuals in the practice of Christianity advise a number of practices: disciplines of the body like diet and sexual abstinence, and prayer, meditation, reading, spiritual direction, conversation with "holy" friends, and so on. All of these practices have the goal of embedding a preoccupation with the life of Christ in daily occupations, and, ultimately, in a lifestyle coordinated by imitation of Christ.

In addition to the construction of a new self, devotional manuals often agree on strategies for identifying, exercising, and strengthening this self. In general, their agenda is to achieve an incremental intensification of religious experience, an intensification that is simultaneously an interiorization and privatization of religious experience. Although communities of similarly en-

<sup>17</sup> *On Perfection*, p. 103.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, *The Care of the Self* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 50-51.

gaged people may surround and support the seeking self, it was not *communities* that were addressed, but individuals. Only to the extent that an *individual* accepts a practice does she begin to experience the particular configuration of attraction and stern discipline that shapes the self in hitherto unimagined ways. Others may know about, may even practice, a program of development of a religious self, but the program itself is not teamwork, but an individual commitment and experience.

## VII

What were the specific strategies for focusing an unfamiliar aspect of the person for cultivation and development? Scrutiny of one's body and what one does *as* body was the first exercise of the religious life. Every historical person who was adept in the spiritual life understood the energy to be gotten from naming the body as a field of conflict. For orthodox Christian authors the body could never simply be enemy, yet it is an undeniable fact of human experience—recognized by other religions as well as by Christianity—that abstinence from food and drink, sex, and sleep, as well as other disciplines can produce states in which the psyche is accessible and vulnerable, conditions necessary for work on the self. Philosophically inclined theologians of the past were often careful to state that such practices cast no doubts on the integrity and goodness of the body and created things.<sup>19</sup> However, authors of devotional manuals were not primarily theologians, and religious leaders of a more pastoral and practical bent tended to describe the distinction of body and soul in less nuanced terms, as a dichotomy in which one component was strengthened only at the direct expense of the other. "When the body is strong, the soul withers; when the soul is strong the body withers," one fourth-century desert ascetic wrote.<sup>20</sup> Although not many Christian authors were that direct in stating their sense of the hostility of body and soul, many of them described the experiential relation of body and soul in terms that were only slightly more appreciative of the body.

The energy to be gotten from rendering the body a field of struggle external to the self but able to affect the self seemed, to the authors of devotional manuals, abundantly demonstrated in practice. St. Francis, his biographer reports, achieved the ecstatic states for which he was famous by "great abstinence and severity, mortifying his body and comforting his spirit

<sup>19</sup> See my *Fullness of Life: Historical Foundations for a New Asceticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981) for a discussion of the care with which many historical authors discussed the role of human bodies in Christian life.

<sup>20</sup> *The Sayings of the Fathers*, in *Western Asceticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 109.

by means of fervent prayers, watchings, and scourgings."<sup>21</sup> *The Imitation of Christ* also describes a direct relationship between physical suffering and spiritual comfort and growth:

The more his body is reduced by suffering, the more his spirit is strengthened by inward grace. His desire to be moulded to the cross of Christ makes him long for trials and difficulties; and he finds such strength in this that he would not want to be delivered from his sorrow and distress if he could, since he believes that as he bears more and heavier burdens for God's sake, so he becomes more acceptable to him.<sup>22</sup>

We must not, however, confuse and conflate a range of different experience all of which is referred to in devotional texts as "suffering." If we have in mind St. Francis's fastings and scourgings when we read a statement like that of *The Imitation of Christ* above, we will omit an important distinction between self-imposed suffering and involuntary suffering. *The Imitation of Christ*, for example, made it clear that involuntary rather than self-imposed suffering was being discussed, suffering that is inevitable and unavoidable in every life.

Even if you arrange everything to suit your own views and wishes you will always find that you still have to suffer something, whether you want to or not. . . . If you do not suffer physical pain, you will have inward trials of the spirit; sometimes God will abandon you, sometimes your neighbor will give you something to bear, and worse still, you will often be a burden to yourself. No remedy or comfort will be able to deliver or relieve you, but you will have to bear it as long as God wills it so.<sup>23</sup>

## VIII

None of the historical interpretations of the imitation of Christ that we have explored can be adopted without reinterpretation in the nuclear world. Neither the voluntary physical suffering of St. Francis nor the cultivation of intellectual virtues and emotional tranquility of Gregory of Nyssa offers a viable spiritual discipline for most twentieth-century Christians. Similarly, reliving the heightened emotions felt by the family and friends of the his-

<sup>21</sup> *Little Flowers*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>22</sup> *Imitation*, p. 105.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

torical Jesus or contemplating and attempting to incorporate the inner life of Christ fails to recommend itself as an activity that offers concrete suggestions for the nuclear world. Moreover, there is an emphasis on an individualistic struggle and achievement embedded in the metaphor. Focus on individual development as an end in itself is neither realistic nor desirable in a world in which the human race must somehow learn to live together in order to avoid dying together in a nuclear holocaust.

There are other problems with imagining Christian life as an imitation of Christ as interpreted by devotional manuals. To what extent was Christ's vocation unique? Christian tradition's insistence that Christ was not only fully human but also fully divine casts doubt on the possibility of imitating his characteristics. The dissimilarities between Christ's life and the lives of Christians seem greater than the similarities. *His* death redeemed the world; the suffering and death of human beings do not. *His* self-sacrificial life, a life that led to martyrdom, was voluntary, tradition says, but countless people suffer both involuntarily and without "spiritual benefit." Even *The Imitation of Christ* recognized that "few people are improved by sickness."<sup>24</sup> Physical pain and illness should certainly not be sought in a world in which there is so much involuntary suffering.

Consider also the problems that arise when the model of Christian life as imitation of Christ is urged on women. Were women understood to be created in the image of God and therefore capable of imitation of Christ? This question was frequently raised and avidly disputed by theologians in the history of Christianity. It is not only a question that occurs to twentieth-century people sensitized to issues surrounding the social construction of gender; the volume of discussion on gender issues in Christian tradition indicates that the roles of women were a perennial source of conflict. The difficulty that Christian tradition has had in trying to decide whether women were created in the image of God may itself be deplorable, but perhaps not puzzling in western societies that subordinated women to male authority and limited their access to education and the public sphere. The argument reflects these social arrangements, but it also reinforces and supplements them, providing a rationale for continuing subjugation of women.

Theological discussions over whether women were created in the image of God, however, were not as important to most Christians as were the devotional models they received. Even in times when this question was being argued by theologians, not only were women implicitly included in

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 73.



injunctions to imitate Christ, but some of the most popular devotional manuals of the Christian centuries were specifically addressed to women—*The Meditations on the Life of Christ*, Juan de Valdez's *Christian Alphabet*, and Francis de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life*, to name only a few. Writers of devotional manuals who were more pastorally than theologically inclined clearly had no difficulty in recommending the model of Christ's life for women's emulation.<sup>25</sup> However, women were consistently directed to emulate, not Christ's qualities of intransigent self-possession, but his obedience, gentleness, and compassion for others.

Imitation of Christ, understood as self-sacrificing concern for others, is a highly problematic model for women. Rosemary Ruether's question, in *Sexism and God-Talk*, as to whether a male savior can benefit women needs to be examined, not in terms of biological differences, but in relation to the gender-specific conditioning in western societies.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the imitation of a self-sacrificing Jesus has been a useful corrective for men, socialized to vigorous competition in societies that encourage male aggression. Self-sacrificing attention to the needs of others has, however, been part of the socialization of women, and therefore does not provide a correction to gender conditioning that encourages and rewards women's self-abnegation and single-minded attention to the needs of men and children. As Valerie Saiving, Judith Plaskow, and others have shown, women's characteristic temptations in western societies are not the same as men's. Women's temptations are to neglect their own talents and gifts, depending on others for self-esteem, and to scatter time and energy in a variety of tasks rather than to sustain a focus on a central task.<sup>27</sup>

The imitation of Christ's gentleness, compassion, and self-sacrificial love is damaging to women in societies that socialize women to such attitudes and behavior. If twentieth-century women are to find the metaphor of imitation of Christ useful, it will need to be on the basis of the characteristics of Christ's life that confront and challenge women's social conditioning rather than those that sustain and reinforce it. Christ's anger at injustice,

<sup>25</sup> See my previous discussions of the role of images of the Virgin in medieval communities: *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), esp. chap. 4; "Images of Women in Fourteenth-Century Tuscan Painting," and "The Virgin's One Bare Breast: Female Nudity and Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture," in *The Female Body in Western Culture*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>26</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Christology: Can a Male Savior Save Women?" in *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), pp. 116–138.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Plaskow, *Sex, Sin, and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980).

Christ's practices of self-remembering and centering, Christ's rejection of the social-role expectations of his day, and the creativity with which Christ met difficult situations and answered awkward questions about himself and his ministry; any or all of these could be useful to women in the twentieth century.

## IX

Is the imitation of Christ a fruitful metaphor for Christian life in the context of the nuclear world? In responding to this question, let us first notice that the metaphor is simultaneously inspirational and flexible. Both of these qualities are advantages for twentieth-century interpreters. No stronger metaphor can be found for Christian life than to understand it as an imitation of Christ. Yet how one identifies the characteristics of the Christ that one seeks to emulate is left open. To be heuristic in a particular concrete situation, a metaphor must enable both constructive conceptual grasp and responsible action.

Suppose, for example, that I were to think of myself as imitating a historical human being who was incarnated for the purpose of demonstrating the central claim of Christianity, namely that God *is* love. The metaphor is still vague; the loving response in every human situation is not immediately obvious. And Christian tradition contains many examples of questionable and even deplorable interpretations of what constitutes loving behavior. St. Augustine's famous injunction, "Love, and do as you will," has been used too often as a rationalization for religious, political, economic, and social oppression.<sup>28</sup> If, then, the metaphor not only *can* be abused, but has often *been* abused, does it hold any constructive possibility for the present?

We can begin to answer this question by acknowledging that every metaphor can be abused either by willful misuse, or by application in situations in which it is destructive. The simultaneous value and danger of metaphors lie in their capacity for interpretation and application in diverse situations. Metaphors cannot themselves guarantee their responsible use. To apply "imitation of Christ" fruitfully, the community or individual using it must define it in relation to an accurately analyzed present situation. Every attitude and act have a context, and the metaphor of Christian life as the imitation of Christ emphasizes the need for an accurate "reading" of the context—as Christ himself had to discern both the requirements of his own integrity and the essential features of the context in which he acted. Christ's

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *In Jo. Epist.* 7.8.

earthly life, according to gospel accounts, included moments of anger, distress, sadness, and feelings of abandonment and self-doubt as well as the loving generosity that we—and historical authors—seem to emphasize. Which of Christ's emotions, actions, or characteristics represent both an accurate interpretation of the needs of my present situation and my own capacity to respond?

Second, imitation of Christ as a model for Christian life inspires and demands strenuous engagement—hard work—rather than passivity. It raises questions; it does not provide answers. Yet its inspirational value is potentially great. In an entertainment culture in which there is little encouragement to develop and articulate an interior life, the metaphor of imitation of Christ can provide a reminder and an impetus for an active rather than passive attitude toward self and society. Because twentieth-century Christians live in a predominantly secular world, we frequently do not think of ourselves as purposely and continuously engaged in the creation of Christian life. The metaphor of imitation of Christ can provide, not a blueprint that can be automatically applied, but a challenge and an inspiration to twentieth-century Christians to engage our clearest self-knowledge and our most perceptive analysis of the situation in which we must act in beginning to ask ourselves, How might I imitate Christ in *this* moment?



# Toyohiko Kagawa: A Mosaic Artist for God

by ROBERT MIKIO FUKADA

*Last year was the centennial of the birth of Toyohiko Kagawa (1888–1960), distinguished Japanese Christian and alumnus of Princeton Seminary. Pastor, evangelist, peace and justice advocate, poet, theologian, organizer of cooperatives, workers' unions, medical clinics, and schools for children in the slums, Kagawa lived among the poor and worked tirelessly to translate Christian ideals into social practice. His pacifism and ministry to the poor made him a controversial figure in his native Japan. Robert Mikio Fukada, a Kagawa scholar and professor of practical theology at the School of Theology at Doshisha University gave this lecture as part of the Kagawa celebration at Princeton Seminary on October 27, 1988.*

ONE HUNDRED years since his birth and twenty-eight years after his death in a simple wooden house in Matsuzawa, now swallowed by the waves of urbanization in Tokyo, Toyohiko Kagawa is due for a historical analysis and evaluation. He was certainly an unusual presence, not only in the Christian community, but in the history of modern Japan. We can admire him for his courage, for his multifaceted social involvements, and for his ability to communicate to the masses as no other Christian in Japan had ever been able to do. But a naive glorification of his name does not do justice to what he really was and what he left for us to examine as his heritage to be carried into the future.

## I

Toyohiko Kagawa was born on July 10, 1888, to Junichi Kagawa, a man of political and business ability, and his concubine wife Kame, a woman of artistic sensitivity. His father died when Toyohiko was four, and his mother two months later. He and his older sister were taken into the family of Junichi's official wife. This was the beginning of his tearful boyhood years. I have often wondered about the psychological dynamics that dominated this young boy, an exceptionally sensitive soul. Toshio Yamazaki, in his recent book studying so-called geniuses who lost their parents early in their lives, takes up Kagawa as one of his examples and attempts an interesting analysis. We find in Kagawa's writings innumerable references to maternal

qualities and symbols in elaborating on the nature of God. It is difficult to determine what concrete maternal experiences Kagawa remembered from his early childhood. His memory of his natural mother, Kame, seems to be hazy. His references to his stepmother, father Junichi's formal wife, are in general negative. He was called "the enemy's child," and "never a gentle word was spoken to him" by his stepmother.<sup>1</sup> He was scared stiff in her presence, and life was totally sad and dark for the young boy.

In contrast to these negative references to his stepmother, Kagawa's description of his mother, though not totally based on his memory, conveys a deep sense of affection and even adoration. We are able to sense a sort of idealization of a maternal figure as he describes his mother in the autobiographical novel *Beyond the Death-line*. He writes, "She was an intelligent person. . . . A pretty woman. . . . Composed facial expression. . . . Loving and gentle looks with large eyes and her warmth piercing through the eyes."<sup>2</sup> And yet this is about the extent of his reference to his mother. Yamazaki's analysis is that although Kagawa lacked an influential memory of his parents, his sense of identity was shaped more by his relationship to his idealized mother than by that to his talented father. If we look for further reference by Kagawa to his parentage, especially to his mother, we find the repeated expressions, "I am the child of a geisha," and "I am the son of my father's concubine wife." It seems that Kagawa held conflicting feelings in his persistent search for a loving mother and in his attempt to justify the degrading condition of his mother as a tragic figure. This produced a mother image that embraced both joy and sadness, pleasure and pain, universal in quality and in presence.

We must be cautious in our attempt to find some helpful psychological factors in Kagawa's growth to maturity. Still, we find it curiously interesting that the man whose childhood was full of insecurity and heartbreaking experiences reached a commitment to faith in God, in whom he placed a complete sense of peace and security. His frequent reference to God's bosom is one indication of such a commitment to God. His recollection of near death at age nineteen describes such a clinging to God's bosom.

I had no fear of death at all. I thought to myself, "I may die," but then said to myself, "When I die, I return to God's futokoro" [bosom] and was quite confident about that. My breathing got more difficult. I lay

<sup>1</sup> Toyohiko Kagawa, *Kirisuto-Kyo Nyumon* [Introduction to Christian Faith], in *Kagawa Zenshu* [The Complete Works of Toyohiko Kagawa] (Tokyo: Kuisuto-Shembunsha, 1963), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Kagawa, *Shisen O Koete* [Beyond the Death-line], in *Kagawa Zenshu*, vol. 14, p. 7.

in my bed, my hands, legs, neck, and even eyes immobile, taking the posture as if I were attached to the wall of a mother's womb. I began to feel that even spiritually I was clinging to God's futokoro.<sup>3</sup>

In the deepest sense, for Kagawa a religious experience meant a return to God's bosom. A book of poems entitled *The Eternal Bosom* contains numerous descriptions of such an experience. Although other people might describe such experiences in a more clinical style or in abstract philosophical and theological language, for Kagawa the most appropriate description was in terms of a child-mother relationship.

In time of sadness and in time of despair  
Only the bosom was the source of comfort.  
When the soul was worn during the wanderings of life,  
the heavenly bosom was the sole comfort as I lay in my bed in  
darkness.  
Oh Eternal bosom, poured out from God . . .  
It is the best nourishment for a lonely orphan, for a  
sulking and twisted soul like mine, indeed food for my soul.  
Mother's bosom is God's bosom!<sup>4</sup>

After losing his parents, Kagawa was sent with his sister to Junichi's birthplace, Tokushima. "I came to live in a big house without love," Kagawa later said.<sup>5</sup> George Bikle observes that "the dearth of parental love and affection during these crucial years . . . permanently influenced his personal development and behavioral dispositions."<sup>6</sup> Although a bright and able student at school, he was a loner, probably because of his exceptional sensitivity to things his peers did not particularly respond to. He was already a fast reader and often found refuge in books. The life of loneliness, however, did not keep him detached from the reality of his surroundings and of the world. He was a perceptive child, able to see situations and problems causing alienation and dehumanization of people in and around Tokushima, where he received his basic schooling. Certainly there was a craving for love and acceptance, but a sense of justice and distaste for binding customs and mores were also brewing in the young mind.

It was indeed fortunate—and those of us living in the Christian tradition

<sup>3</sup> Kagawa, *Kirisuto-Kyo Nyumon*, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Toyohiko Kagawa, *Eien No Chibusa* [Eternal Bosom], in *Kagawa Zenshu*, vol. 20, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Emerson O. Bradshaw, *Unconquerable Kagawa* (St. Paul: Macalester, 1952), p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> George B. Bikle, Jr., *The New Jerusalem: Aspects of Utopianism in the Thought of Kagawa Toyohiko* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), p. 12.

will call it providence—that fifteen-year-old Toyohiko came across American Presbyterian missionary families. I specifically use the term “families” here because most studies of Kagawa mention the names of Charles Alexander Logan and Harry W. Myers and seldom those of their wives and families. We know, at least through some specific references in Kagawa’s writings, that this somewhat eccentric, sensitive boy was welcome in their homes at all times. Kagawa recalls,

Mrs. Myers used to call me “my prodigal son” and whenever I was confronting problems and feeling down, she cried with me. When I was happy she shared my joy. About ten years ago she prepared a special chair, a set of napkin and ring, just for me. She provided comfort to me when I was lonely and homeless. Even today she keeps me in her concern like a real son, having a picture of my younger days on her desk.<sup>7</sup>

We see in this encounter of Kagawa with two Presbyterian missionaries and their families an eloquent witness to the transforming impact of a simple meeting of person and person, seemingly coincidental on the surface. We often do not have an adequate explanation for such a meeting but only say that a mysterious hand was at work. Both Charles Logan and Harry Myers were Americans with southern backgrounds. They not only had a passionate faith in the loving God incarnate in Jesus Christ, but an overflowing love for people, whom they could embrace both spiritually and physically. I would like to emphasize this embracing quality of these missionaries. Logan and Myers were two different personalities. Logan was assertive, straightforward in presenting the gospel to people; Myers was receptive and sensitive to even the tiny voices of people around him, and very patient. But both could communicate, simply by their being, speaking, or not speaking, a sense of acceptance and warmth to people they encountered. Their embracing warmth, sense of humor, and lightheartedness interwoven in their confident faith in God were strikingly fresh and penetrating to many people, but especially to young Kagawa.

The conversion experience of Kagawa at age fifteen was not the fruit of intellectual persuasion or rational argument, though he was an exceptional young man with a keen and perceptive mind. Logan and Myers conveyed to him that he was accepted and loved not only by them but also by God, that a new life was possible, and that he was not doomed to a restrictive

<sup>7</sup> Toyohiko Kagawa, *Shinpen Zakki* [Personal Notes on Daily Life] in *Kagawa Zenshu*, vol. 24, p. 16.



environment or a corrupted bloodline. When Kagawa's brother caused bankruptcy and his fragile dream of higher education seemed shattered, Myers provided consolation and encouragement.

At Meiji Gakuin Seminary, Kagawa was without a doubt a brilliant student. A fast reader with a sharp ability to comprehend, he seems to have possessed a good command of the English language, particularly of reading. Meiji Gakuin, a Presbyterian school, was at the time a progressive institution with an able faculty and a well-stocked library. Interestingly, Kagawa did not refer to his school experiences very much in his writings. Evidently class sessions were not very exciting to him. In any case, what Kagawa gained most at Meiji Gakuin was a great variety of insights from his extensive reading. He bragged later that he had read all the books in the library, which numbered between fifteen and twenty thousand. Shiro Murata, a classmate and later a minister-president of Meiji Gakuin, recalls that Kagawa in those days was already very much interested in astronomy, geology, and economics, and read much of John Ruskin, Tolstoy, and Henrik Ibsen.<sup>8</sup> Here was an early indication of Kagawa's far-reaching interest and curiosity about the nature of humanity and the universe, from the point of view of both philosophy and science.

After two years at Meiji Gakuin, he moved to Kobe Theological Seminary, where his mentor Harry White Myers had become a faculty member. Here again we have little recollection of student life in Kagawa's writings. His long-time colleague and traveling companion, Pastor Shiro Kuroda, remembers that Kagawa was not altogether a welcome and popular student. When a professor made some reference to resource books, Kagawa might ask, "Have you read those books yourself?" His behavior was at times a bit bizarre to his teachers as well as to fellow students. Once he brought a cast-away dog into his dorm, and from time to time, beggars. When Harry Myers attempted to defend him, other faculty members complained, "He is spoiled because you shelter him."<sup>9</sup>

## II

Soon after Kagawa reached Kobe Theological Seminary, he became aware of the existence of the Shinkawa slum, only seven hundred meters from the school. His initial contact with this notoriously poverty-stricken

<sup>8</sup> Shiro Murata, "Kagawa in Meiji Gakuin Days," in *Kagawa: 20 Seki No Kaitakusha* [Kagawa: Twentieth-Century Pioneer] (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 1960), pp. 42-43.

<sup>9</sup> Shiro Kuroda, *Ningen Kagawa Toyohiko* [Kagawa the Man] (Tokyo: Kirisuto Shinbunsha, 1970), pp. 45-50.

area in the outskirts of Kobe was not a well-planned action. He was naturally sensitive toward the oppressed, weak, and downtrodden, and his religious faith was significantly enriched when he was received as a seminary intern into the household of Pastor Ken Nagao in the town of Toyohashi in the summer of 1908. Weakened by tuberculosis, he was an extra burden in the Nagao household with ten children. Nagao was a quiet and patient man, never complaining or showing anger. His life was caught in poverty, and yet he often shared his meal, as well as his family's, with the hungry and took in beggars from the streets. Kuroda, in his description of Nagao, calls him the Brother Lawrence of Japan. Kagawa found in Nagao an authentic man of living religion. Nagao became a prototype of the gospel incarnate in the Japanese soil. It is possible to say, then, that Kagawa had the image of Ken Nagao in his mind when he started to frequent the dark alleys of the Shinkawa slums.

Kagawa moved into Shinkawa on the evening of December 24, 1909. As to the real motivation for this drastic action by a young man with a prognosis by his doctor that he did not have much more time to live, we are not sure. We must assume that he felt an irresistible sense of urgency.

Shinkawa, which is no longer in existence by name, was one of the dark valleys in society created by the rapidity of industrialization and urbanization, which took place under the government promotion of a strong nation with a mighty army. Young men from rural areas poured into the cities where major industries were flourishing. Most of them were unskilled and unfamiliar with life in the cities. Hurt and sick, often dismissed from their work, these laborers and their families sought pockets of refuge in society. Shinkawa was one of those pockets. It was a complex area with historically segregated people as well as the economically depressed and oppressed. Kagawa noted that in his immediate vicinity, there were 320 housing units with 1,212 people living in a 120-square-meter area. His dwelling was a room six feet by nine, and the rear room was six feet square. There was no window, and he had to rely on a community kitchen, a common well and toilet.<sup>10</sup> The exact size of the population of Shinkawa at that time is not clear. There is no question, however, that there were more than eight thousand people there.

Here young Kagawa tried everything he could think of. He responded first of all to the immediate needs of people visible to him. He was up before 5:00 A.M. and, after a period of meditation, taught children in the area. He

<sup>10</sup> Tomio Muto, ed., *Hyakusan Nin No Kagawa Den* [Kagawa Biographies by 103 People] (Tokyo: Kirisuto Shinbun-sha, 1960), vol. 1, pp. 15-20.

visited the sick, conducted funerals, organized adult classes in the evenings, and in his spare time read and wrote. Gradually young people came to assist him as volunteers, and he was able to expand his program. Explicitly religious activities were a part of the total program from the beginning. There were street-corner meetings as well as early morning and evening preaching meetings in Kagawa's now somewhat expanded room.

Haru Shiba was one of those volunteers who appeared in Shinkawa because she sensed that there was something totally unusual in the young man who came to lead singing and to preach the gospel in the printing factory where she worked. Her recollections describe her very first impression.

I was working in a factory during the day and visited the slum at night. I understood how much Mr. Kagawa was doing for the people around him when I saw the poor, lonely room where he lived. Mr. Takeuchi and other young people also quietly but consistently served the people by self-sacrifice. Mr. Kagawa ate only twice a day and saved one meal for others. He gave away his last coat to someone who did not have clothes to wear. I could clearly see he was making an impact upon his followers. He showed that the spirit of Jesus was the greatest of all powers to make a person new and good. I was completely captivated by this Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

Haru Shiba eventually became Kagawa's wife. She not only played an important role in Kagawa's life as wife and mother, but was also an able leader in various movements and programs initiated by her husband.

Kagawa engaged in a multifaceted ministry in the notorious slum of Shinkawa for some fourteen years. He soon had many supporters and co-workers. His early colleagues were a few children who tagged along with the young man from the seminary, carrying paper lanterns for him, calling out to people to gather for street preaching or for a Christian meeting in his small dwelling unit. Later, helpers like Masaru Takeuchi, a son of a button maker, joined in the work. It is worth noting that the men and women who were attracted to Kagawa in the slum life were basically down-to-earth, grass-roots young people without much education. Yet these young people grew to be effective participants in the new religiosocial movement being born in the slum.

Picturesque descriptions of Kagawa's activities in Shinkawa are provided

<sup>11</sup> Shoichi Miyake, *Gekidoki No Nihon Shakai Undoshi* [History of Japanese Society in the Period of Rapid Change] (Tokyo: Gendai Hyoron-sha, 1972), p. 56.

by Takeuchi in *Toyohiko Kagawa and His Volunteers*.<sup>12</sup> He describes the weekly visit Kagawa made to each family. This was not a complicated task since people lived almost on top of each other, but there were so many of them. What impressed Takeuchi most about Kagawa's weekly visits in Shinkawa was the immediate action he took once he grasped the needs of the people. Some of these actions were successful and brought quick fruit. Other programs were total failures, such as Tengokuya, an inexpensive restaurant which closed after only three months because many customers were eating on a credit basis and not paying up.

Takeuchi lists some of the early programs initiated by Kagawa in Shinkawa as an example of his effort to see and respond to the total needs of his people: a free clinic, a free employment service, an effort to improve living quarters, a low-interest loan system, a day-care center, a children's center with a small library. Here we see this energetic young man, confronted by devastating human conditions, trying to meet every need with an immediate action. Speed of action was Kagawa's unique characteristic throughout his life. His was not always a balanced act. He was usually more involved in renovating the concrete situation than in theoretically analyzing the nature of that situation. But his mind was always working to see the total picture in which the problem he was trying to deal with arose.

### III

Thus the basic style of Kagawa's approach to life, to society, and his mode of putting his Christian faith into action were gradually formulated in the early years of his life in the Kobe slum. And this style was quickly established among a number of young colleagues, such as Takeuchi, so that when Kagawa left for Princeton Theological Seminary for study in 1914 and was absent for three years and nine months, the work was carried on well by a group of people in and out of Shinkawa.

What Kagawa brought back from his study and experiences in the United States was an additional perspective on human conditions and social problems. We do not have a great deal of source material with which to reconstruct Kagawa's study years in America. We know that he was more interested in the study of clinical psychology, mathematics, biology, and natural sciences than in theological subjects taught in the seminary. His Princeton years were certainly a period of refreshment, but it was the period after

<sup>12</sup> Masaru Takeuchi, *Kagawa Toyohiko To Sono Borantia* [Kagawa and His Volunteers] (Kobe: Jesus Band Church, 1973).



he left Princeton that left an impact on him and affected his life and work back in Japan. His exposure to the crowded and economically oppressed situation in New York, particularly in the Bowery, aroused his sensitivity and made him realize that what he was confronting in Shinkawa was not an isolated phenomenon of one particular society. He observed a demonstration by some sixty thousand workers and reached a clearer awareness that a solution for complex problems of the poor and the oppressed in industrial settings cannot be achieved by an individual's heroic action and leadership but must be approached by the consolidated effort and solidarity of working people.

Upon his return to Japan in May 1917, Kagawa not only moved back to his Shinkawa residence but plunged right into the activities of Yuaikai, a rather infantile but pioneering labor organization under the leadership of Bunji Suzuki. By May of 1918 Kagawa was serving as the branch representative of Fukiai District for Yuaikai. Later Suehiro Nishio, who headed the Democratic Socialist Party in 1960, commented that Suzuki was the father and Kagawa the mother of the Yuaikai movement. This was Kagawa's initiation into movements to organize labor, and it was a part of his attempt to tackle the root causes of poverty and problems of human alienation. In the labor movement he acted more as a provider of spiritual vision than as a theoretical or practical leader. He had a rich poetical ability, and even when he was critically reacting to social evils he expressed some of this criticism in poetical forms. Even at the peak of his prophetic denunciation of social conditions, he did not fail to assert basic human goodness, the potential for human beings to change, and the possibilities for people to work together for a new society. He provided new and fresh dimensions to labor movements by emphasizing the need to search for the well-being of the whole person. Many of the pronouncements and principles for action coming out of labor movements in the Kansai area, or western Japan, between 1919 and 1922, were drafted by Kagawa. A good example is the statement of the Yuaikai Kansai Association issued in April 1919:

We are the producers, creators, and people of labor. We are metal casters in a foundry. We cast iron to build a new world. We must hammer the red-hot iron with a sacred ideal burning in our hearts, with blessed justice, love and faith, before the iron cools.

The document concludes with a resounding affirmation of nonviolent reform of society:

We dare deny all agitating radical thought arousing revolution and use of violence. We oppose all destruction and illusions and affirm that the rebuilding and reconstruction of the world will be achieved by us, the laborers. We thus declare that the day is near when we will look up to the bright sun of wisdom and idealism.<sup>13</sup>

Although this may sound to us like naive optimism, it was a tremendously effective appeal to working people in Japan in 1919, when the labor movement was not making much headway and a wave of Marxist-Leninist social philosophy was starting to seep into the labor population.

When a historic strike of shipbuilding workers at Kobe Kawasaki and Mitsubishi docks took place in October 1921, Kagawa was in the very front line of the demonstration of some twenty-five thousand people. But it was this strike, in which he was arrested and imprisoned for thirteen days, that clearly indicated that Kagawa's nonviolent concept was not permeating the leadership of the movement.

Though he played a pioneering role in the early stage of the Japanese labor movement, he was quickly pushed to the sidelines of the movement. Busy with other projects, Kagawa gradually withdrew from the front line of organized labor. Now he was spending more time, not only in continuing his programs in Shinkawa, but in initiating and nurturing a peasant's co-operative movement. The idea of the cooperative became an integral and essential part of his social philosophy and program for social reconstruction.

One of his first experiments was the establishment of a consumer cooperative called Kyoeikisha in Osaka, organized in August 1919. A part of the program of this cooperative was a medical service, a unique venture in the cooperative concept in Japan at that time. From here Kagawa moved quickly into the role of initiator and organizer of different kinds of cooperatives. He did not always take the lead, but he played a vital role in providing basic philosophical guidelines. The cooperative movement was not especially colorful. It did not hit the newspaper headlines. But for Kagawa it was one of the most effective ways of activating his fundamental philosophy of life, based on his faith in the God of justice and love, whose ultimate reality was to be realized in the kingdom of God. In the movement Kagawa was able to proclaim the unavoidable need to deal with human beings as a whole with no dichotomy between the spiritual and physical, between idea and action. His active involvement in the cooperative movement was from

<sup>13</sup> Yoriyuki Murashima, "Kagawa as a Labor Movement Leader," in *Kagawa: 20 Seki No Kaitakusha*, p. 70.

the beginning a part of his search for the total welfare of people. By the time he moved to Tokyo in 1923, the cooperative movement was for Kagawa a vehicle for changing lifestyles and values both in the cities and in rural villages. As wars spread during this period, his activity with cooperatives was integrated with his passionate search for peace, and the two became an inseparable movement.

We have noted Kagawa's continuous immersion in real human conditions and his attempt to do something about them with immediate and concrete responses. We see an example of his speedy response to situations around him when eastern Japan, with Tokyo as the central point, was hit by a devastating earthquake on September 1, 1923. The very next day he mobilized all churches in the city of Kobe, as well as other Christian groups, to gather food, blankets, and anything that might be helpful in serving the homeless in Tokyo. By late afternoon he was aboard a small ship sailing for Tokyo, since the railway was out of service. As soon as he made a survey of the situation in Tokyo and consulted friends as to what was the most urgent need, he was back aboard a ship to return to Kobe. Within a few days he was sailing again from Kobe, taking with him three young men from his Shinkawa work as well as the collected goods. He pitched a tent in the Honjo area, a completely burned-out section of Tokyo, and immediately organized a work team to distribute food and blankets, and to make a survey of the people in the area and their needs. He then approached the municipal government to see what he could do. This marks the shift of his activities from Kobe to Tokyo. He sought a future direction for the destroyed capital city as a consultant for the city government. He often said that when there is a fire, keep pumping the fire extinguisher while you pray. This humorous expression symbolizes his posture. For him prayer was not only a spiritual act but also an earnest search for social expressions based on a spiritual experience.

#### IV

In the 1930s, we see in Kagawa a process of consolidating what he had frantically attempted in various corners of society in the previous two decades, first out of his base in Shinkawa and then through his foothold in Tokyo. The core activity now, however, was fairly explicitly religious. Though he was not a traditional minister and evangelist, we see him in the 1930s as a preacher, whether in evangelistic meetings related to the kingdom of God campaign or in promotional meetings for the cooperative movement. Through his lecture-preaching style, he was able to reach millions of Japa-

nese, as well as people overseas during his trips abroad, with the message of the redemptive love of God applicable to every human need and to the total communal life of people.

Kagawa had a tone of optimistic trust in human goodness though the central issue with which he struggled throughout his life was the matter of *uchu-aku* or universal evil. He argued for the ultimate perfection of the incarnational process of the redemptive love in a person. Charles Germany, who served nearly two decades in Japan in the postwar years, puts it well when he describes Kagawa's stance: "Put sharply, but certainly no more sharply than Kagawa himself put it, a man redeemed through the love of Christ thereupon carries into his own life-activities a character of redeeming love which challenges the very uniqueness of the redemptive work of Christ himself."<sup>14</sup>

We are looking at Kagawa, in the broadest sense, as a prophetic preacher to the whole of Japanese society. Certainly at the core of his effort to bring forth personal and social renewal and reconstruction was his faith in God and the absolute ethic of love. Richard Drummond, another seasoned missionary in Japan, writes:

Perhaps the most historically significant aspect of Kagawa's career was the fact that as a Christian he informed the moral conscience of a largely non-Christian nation probably more than any other of his countrymen in the twentieth century. The ethical awareness, the social ideals, and to a very appreciable extent the spiritual understanding, of the Japanese people in the present generation are, in my judgment, owed to Kagawa as a nation rarely owes its inner life to one man.<sup>15</sup>

Kagawa was effective in public lectures and speeches because he was able to present vividly the harsh reality of human life at a specific time and place and at the same time present an alternative to change that reality. In this sense he was a preacher. During the kingdom of God campaign, to which he committed himself exclusively from 1930 to 1934, he often spoke six times a day. His speaking style was unconventional. He usually used large sheets of paper and relied on calligraphic writing as he illustrated his presentation, whether it was a sermon or a lecture. His fresh speaking style aroused listeners with unexpected dimensions of life and society, sometimes

<sup>14</sup> Charles H. Germany, *Protestant Theologies in Modern Japan* (Tokyo: IISR Press, 1965), pp. 38-39.

<sup>15</sup> Richard H. Drummond, *A History of Christianity in Japan* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 241.



by poetic expressions and sometimes with concrete data and scientific insights. Without doubt the basic presupposition was his faith in God the creator, who is able to restore and repair the brokenness of human life and society, and in Jesus Christ as we see him alive in the biblical records.

Kagawa's life was facing increasing difficulties in the 1930s. Japan was gradually advancing into a swamp of military fascism, and the world was struggling to recover from the Depression. Besides his intensive involvement in the kingdom of God campaign, an ecumenical evangelical program, he was busy writing. He also made several trips overseas for evangelistic preaching, to speak at international conferences, to promote cooperative programs and movements, and for peace missions. It was evident to him that the Japan he loved was quickly moving further and further away from the ideal state he had envisioned. He agonized as he continued the prophetic task of offering alternatives for life and society and struggled to maintain various programs developed under his leadership. Letters he wrote during his trips abroad often expressed such agony, as he wrote of his dreams gradually fading and of the power of evil overtaking the world community. I have in my possession his letter addressed to my father dated June 10, 1941, from Cincinnati. By that time the dark clouds of war were spreading over the Atlantic as well as the Pacific. He wrote,

Again I travel through the continent under thick clouds of the June sky. Mine is a lonely trip on the road for peace. Alone I go about in a foreign land and see the work of mysterious hands. Who is able to mend the broken earthen surface of this world? There is no way but to rely on the blood of the Cross.

His agony is well expressed in that well-known poem "The Sorrow of War," which begins:

Ah tears! Unbidden tears!  
Familiar friends since childhood's lonely years,  
Long separated we,  
Why do ye come again to dwell with me?<sup>16</sup>

Kagawa was arrested on August 25, 1940, after he preached a sermon entitled "Learning from Jeremiah's Lamentation." Together with him in the military police detention center was Pastor Kiyozumi Ogawa, a long-time colleague. The charge against Kagawa was hazy, but basically it was a

<sup>16</sup> Toyohiko Kagawa, *Poems for Life* (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1941).



charge against his call for peace. He read the Bible in the dim light coming from the cell window. He found encouragement in 1 Corinthians 15:30-31:

And we ourselves—why do we face these dangers  
hour by hour?

Every day I die: I swear it by my pride in you,  
my brothers—

for in Christ Jesus our Lord I am proud of you.

After strenuous efforts by numerous people Kagawa and Ogawa were released on September 13.

After World War II, we see Kagawa once again active on behalf of the people in need, and working at an unbelievable pace. Here again he was quick to see the situation and respond with vision and concrete proposals for action. First was an act of repentance. Though his call for the national movement for united repentance did not take off with gusto, his call was felt not only in churches but at different levels of government and social organizations. The second response was in terms of physical needs in the devastated country, extensively destroyed by air raids. Be it food, clothing, or shelter, Kagawa tried to mobilize all available resources through cooperative efforts. He even wrote a letter to General MacArthur, the commanding general of the Allied Forces occupying Japan, appealing for food assistance in the acute situation of postwar Japan. Third, there was the matter of the political reorganization of Japan. He was immediately called upon by Prince Higashikuni, who organized a short-lived cabinet to deal with the confused social scene right after the war, to serve as an adviser on religious, moral, and welfare matters. He was also involved in the process of reorganizing the Socialist Party. Though he never took an official political position, he recognized the need for political structures to function creatively. And there was his work with peace movements and issues. Ultimately it was peace that he was concerned with. The realization of the kingdom of God, to which he was committed throughout his life, meant the establishment of world peace. He saw in the concept of a federated world state a possible means through which a lasting peace can be achieved. Eventually he assumed a leadership role in the World Movement for World Federation.

## V

First and last, Kagawa was a man of God, a prophetic evangelist. Here we need to remind ourselves that a prophet is primarily a person making an urgent appeal to his or her people to shift their direction back to God's love

and justice, to trust and obey God's command to love one's neighbors, and to seek first the kingdom of God. The purpose of evangelistic tasks is to restructure human relationships as God's children so that sustaining and enriching communities can be formed. In this sense Kagawa concluded his earthly life truly as a prophetic evangelist and a Christian minister to all of God's people in the world.

Kagawa was far from perfect. He was a man of self-confidence, but at times that confidence had something of an overtone of egoism, or at least it appeared that way to some people. His quick analysis of urgent issues and situations and his rapid concrete responses had a conceptual foundation, but sometimes resulted in inadequate examination of available data and arbitrary actions. He had an amazing ability to stimulate and nurture people, whether they were educated, cultured, religious, or not, and to mobilize them to work for a wider society and for the good of the poor and oppressed. An advocate of controversial causes, he remained an appealing person. He aroused people's consciences and at the same time presented visions and methods for coping with what was dehumanizing them and their neighbors. But he, at times, had an emotional reaction against certain ideas and people and rejected them with harshness. He was basically a poet, creative and imaginative, not merely in the literary sense but in his outlook on life and in his life of faith in the all-embracing love of God. He pursued an ideal, dreamed dreams, and continuously attempted to portray visions of people and the world living in freedom and peace. And yet he sometimes lacked critical awareness of historical trends in Japanese society, such as a possible economic collapse or a landslidelike surge of people into cities. He possessed an almost sentimental sense of intimacy toward the emperor and never made any critical comment about him or about the imperial system and powers that use that system for self-interest and power accumulation.

What, then, do we see in Kagawa today as we near the end of this turbulent century and face a new era? Kagawa was a pioneer in addressing social problems and leading movements of social change. Certainly he reflected the spirit of his time, but he was able to see beyond his immediate historical context and to arouse both Christians and non-Christians around the world to work for social renewal and peace. He resisted with passion a fragmentalization of persons. For him there was no dichotomy between body and spirit, between science and religion, between emotion and reason. All of these were brought into the service of the ultimate goal of the reign of God. He approached life with the sensitivity of a talented artist. He saw jewels in each person, and by reproaching and battling the sins of human

beings attempted to uplift the precious gifts of a child of God to make a mosaic art of beauty and sturdy usefulness. There was an overflowing sense of optimism in him that God's will shall come to full bloom. Love as the fuel of the social system will be in full flame when each human being discovers that God has a plan for him or her and gives each gifts to carry out that task. Naive optimism? Maybe so. But for Kagawa a new life in Christ was an unquestionable reality, and he held high his torch of hope in the reign of God even in the darkest hour of human alienation and national catastrophe.

# Three Poems

by TOYOHICO KAGAWA

## LITTLE SISTER

She leaves her bed  
At five;  
And it is ten  
At night  
When she comes home again.

She has her bath,  
And does her hair;  
And then  
'Tis almost midnight  
When she kneels to pray  
After her heavy day.

Often beside  
The whirring wheels  
Her head droops down,  
Half-starved for sleep.

My little sister  
Of the factory  
Is sweet.

From *Songs from the Slums*, by Toyohiko Kagawa. Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1935. Copyright renewal © 1963 by Lois J. Erickson. Used by permission of Abingdon Press.

## DISCOVERY

I cannot invent  
New things,  
Like the airships  
Which sail  
On silver wings;  
But today  
A wonderful thought  
In the dawn was given,  
And the stripes on my robe,  
Shining from wear,  
Were suddenly fair,  
Bright with a light  
Falling from Heaven—  
Gold, and silver, and bronze  
Lights from the windows of Heaven.

And the thought  
Was this:  
That a secret plan  
Is hid in my hand;  
That my hand is big,  
Big,  
Because of this plan.

That God,  
Who dwells in my hand,  
Knows this secret plan  
Of the things He will do for the world  
Using my hand!



## PRAYER

In the clear morning  
I have climbed the hill.

Smoke from the factories  
Rolls west to east  
Across the huge red sun.

A train puffs past  
Through tiny, far-off fields.

Bright buds are everywhere.  
God of the hills,  
The smoke,  
The sun,  
The growing grain,  
I cannot word my prayer.

God . . . green things . . .  
Green things . . . God . . .  
Lord of each little leaf  
On every tree;

Lord of the clouds that drift  
Far out to sea,  
I thank Thee  
That Thou has shown  
Jesus  
To me.

God,  
I pray  
That Thou wilt take  
Evil away.

AMEN.

# Why Are We Here?

by THOMAS G. LONG

*Thomas G. Long is Frances Landey Patton Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship at Princeton Seminary. His two most recent books are The Senses of Preaching (John Knox Press, 1988) and Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible (Fortress Press, 1988). This sermon was delivered in Miller Chapel at the opening communion service on September 19, 1988.*

Text: Acts 17:16-34

ONE OF the questions that hangs in the air around seminary campuses, especially at the beginning of a fresh and new year is the question, Why are we here? What am *I* doing here? What are you doing here? What is the mysterious combination of forces and wills, decisions and accidents, coincidence and providence that has led this peculiar group of people to this peculiar place, to do the peculiar things seminarians do together, at this moment in our lives. Why are we here?

I know that it is not only people on seminary campuses who ask that question, but I do think that theological communities are forced to face it in a more pointed way than others. Somehow theological decisions and religious vocational moves seem to demand a deeper than usual explanation and justification. Tell somebody you're going to law school or medical school, and they say, "Terrific; which one?" Tell them you're going to seminary, and they say, "Terrific; why?" I recall that Harry Golden, who was for years the editor of the *Carolina Israelite*, was as a boy always puzzled that his father was a loyal attender at synagogue, never missed a Sabbath service, even though his father publicly proclaimed himself to be an agnostic, perhaps even an atheist. One day Golden got up the nerve to ask his father the Why-are-you-here? question: "You don't believe in God. Why do you go to synagogue?" "There are many reasons why a person would go to synagogue," replied his father. "Take Silverberg. He goes to synagogue to talk to God. Me? I go to synagogue to talk to Silverberg."

So there are many reasons why we might be here today, but even so, I suspect that most of us have already been called upon to justify to someone, somewhere, why we might be here today. When I first decided to go to seminary, the first people I told were my parents. They had packed me off for my junior year in college fully expecting that their premed son would someday become "my son, the doctor." But when I came home at Thanks-

giving, my vocational decision changed, I sat them down in the den and broke the news that I was going not into medicine but ministry. My father simply nodded, calmly and judiciously, but my mother burst into loud tears of anguish. At the time I thought she did that because she was the more fragile of the two, but now I suspect that she had a better grasp on the issues. She knew that the ministry is demanding, and she feared for her son. She has come now to celebrate the decision, but she went around the house for days wringing her hands. Finally a friend of hers at our church wrote her a note which said, "I know that you are worried and upset by your son's plans to become a minister, but remember what Jesus said in Matthew 21:2, 'The Lord hath need of him. Loose him and let him go.'" Well, that gave her some comfort, at least until she actually looked up the verse in Matthew and discovered that Jesus had said that about an ass.

The point is that most of us here today have had some experience answering, for friends, family, colleagues, the question, *Why are we here?* And we have our answers. Some of us are here, I suppose, because of a tug we felt somewhere in our hearts. It had neither a sharp face nor a clear name, but it seemed something like what a call into ministry ought to be, and so we left our places of work and study, loaded our clothes and books into the car, and we're here.

Others of us are here because some place of service beckons us. We have been moved by the sufferings of the sick and dying, seen the needs of those in prison, heard the cries of those who are hungry and homeless, and because of what we have heard, and seen, we put down our nets, left our boats, and are here.

Still others of us are here because we are concerned about the quality of the church's ministry, because we are committed, in a landscape of soft churches and status-seeking clergy, to the training of ministers who have integrity and a passion for God's redemptive justice. So, we're here.

There are countless reasons why those of us in this room happen to find ourselves in this place, and all of these reasons make perfectly good sense, or at least enough sense to place us here rather than any of the other places we might be today.

There is a deeper sense, though, in which none of our personal stories can quite name the fullness of why we are here. We have our reasons, and we can add them up, but the sum does not equal the whole. There is, as Paul Ricoeur might put it, "a surplus of meaning" in our being in this place. There is an outlandish "out of placeness" about our being here.

I bring this up because the story we heard this morning from Acts practically screams the Why-am-I-here? question. There is an outlandish out-of-placeness about this picture of Paul standing on the Areopagus quoting Greek writers in his Hebrew-Christian sermon to that assortment of Philosophy 101 types who were curious to find out if “this parrot knows what he is talking about.” Indeed, it appears that Luke has crafted this text to epitomize the out-of-placeness that characterized the whole ministry of Paul.

Nothing we know about Paul’s early life, either from his own hand or from the narrative construction in Acts, can fully account for his being in that place. He was evidently born into a devout Jewish home. He was a citizen of the realm, and he had a good education, perhaps of both the rabbinical and Hellenistic varieties. His fingers were nimble in the service of a useful trade. Those are the facts. Take that beginning and project it into a person’s future, and what do you see? I see a Paul who is a good citizen, active at the local synagogue, maybe the rabbi, maybe not. Perhaps a Paul at the dinner table with his wife and their children, growing up like olive shoots, one of whom would one day say, “Papa, why on this night of all nights . . . ?” and old Paul could nod his head wisely and tell the ancient story that he knew and loved and lived so well.

But that was not to be Paul’s place. No—three times beaten with rods, once pelted with stones, three times shipwrecked, frequent journeys with danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, sleepless nights, hunger, cold, thirst, not to mention the daily anxiety and pressure, including, according to Acts, this appearance on a hill in view of the Parthenon, surrounded by Athenians who considered him a propagandist for outlandish gods and who laughed like hell at his deepest truth. That’s the kind of life—that’s the kind of experience—that arouses the question, *Why* is this man here?

We know the answer to that question, of course, or at least we think we do. Paul was there in the same way that we are here, because something had happened to him. Some change had occurred for him; something had welled up in him; he was now alive to Christ in ways that put him where he would otherwise not be. The story of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus is well known, of course, and surely Paul would say that his transformation on that day made him willing and eager to be in unlikely places.

But wait a minute. We need to be careful here. People frequently talk about Paul’s “conversion experience,” but one of the people who does not

speak in those terms is Paul.<sup>1</sup> In fact, when he describes the Damascus road experience in Galatians, he does so not so much in the language of conversion, but in the classical language of a prophetic call. In other words, the focus is not primarily on something that bubbled up within him, but rather on a claim that came from outside him. He talks less about his becoming alive to Christ than he does about Christ becoming alive to him. To be sure, Paul was transformed by the experience, but before he was transformed, he was transfixed by the presence of the risen Christ. Even in the account in Acts we do not find Paul gliding away from the Damascus road singing the convert's song of a new orientation, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound . . . once I was blind, but now I see." To the contrary, his song could only have been, "Amazing grace, how disturbing the presence . . . once I saw, but now I am blind."

Paul stood there that day before the council of the Areopagus not first and foremost because *he* had changed, but first and foremost because the world had changed, the ages had shifted, the old had passed away and the new had come. And Paul's ministry from then on occurred along the shifting fault line of two ages, at the churning juncture of the old and the new.

Part of what this means for us is that we are freed from the compulsion to justify our presence here solely on the basis of our personal devotion, commitment, or knowledge. In fact, when we try to do that, we are always in a fearful and defensive posture. Every new thought, every divergent opinion, every person who does not believe the way we believe, must be viewed as a threat, because if our interior justification for being here should collapse, then the gospel has collapsed for us and we no longer belong in this place. But, as Paul told the Athenians, the good news is that God does not live in shrines made by human hands, not even theological hands, not even the shrines of our personal religious experience. On the contrary, it is God who gives everything—everything. It is God who brings life out of death; it is God who causes the old to pass away and the new to come. We do not own the gospel, and we do not have to protect our private understandings or fear the gospel's destruction. We do not even *have* the gospel; the gospel has us and always comes to us, liberating us to be once more the people of the risen and living Christ. "With Easter," writes Moltmann, "the laughter of the redeemed, the dance of the liberated begin."<sup>2</sup> We are here to learn the punch line and to practice the dance steps.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Marion L. Soards, *The Apostle Paul: An Introduction to His Writing and Teachings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 24–25.

<sup>2</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 110.



But it also means that we stand precisely where Paul stood, right at that churning and suffering place where the old age grates against the new, where the laughter of the redeemed is surrounded, as it was in Athens, by the old era's laughter of scorn, and the dance of the liberated looks for all the world like the carrying of a cross.

The theologian Dorothee Soelle once wrote an essay on resurrection and liberation, and she wanted to close the essay with a resurrection story. She found her story not in a church or an Easter sermon, where resurrection stories would seem to have their normal place, but in the family concentration camp at Auschwitz. From September 1943 to July 1944 there were children in this camp, children who—to mislead world opinion—were compelled to write cheerful postcards to those outside. In this camp the adult prisoners decided to provide schooling for the children. She writes:

Children who were already destined for the gas chambers learned French, mathematics, and music. The teachers were completely clear about the hopelessness of the situation. Without a world themselves, they taught knowledge of the world. Exterminated themselves, they taught non-extirpation and life. Humiliated themselves, they restored the dignity of human beings. Someone may say: "But it didn't help them." But so say the Gentiles.<sup>3</sup>

In the face of the hissing of the gas chamber, the affirmation of life and dignity is the laughter of the redeemed, and in the midst of a slow death march, the teaching of children is the dance of the liberated.

I have a minister friend named Joanna who recently went with some members of her congregation to spend a week of worship and learning with some new-found friends in Christ, the little pentecostal congregation of the Church of God in Esteli, Nicaragua. The Americans got off the plane, decently and in order, with suitcases loaded down with everything we Americans think is essential—from bug spray to panty hose to peanut butter and Pepto Bismol. They soon became embarrassed by all the possessions they had brought, and humbled by the awareness that the true wealth was not in their suitcases or traveler's checks, but in the joyous faith they encountered in this small congregation in a poor and troubled land. "Our time with you . . . was a time of judgment," Joanna wrote later to the Nicaraguan Christians. "We realized that we seek our security in so many things, and I do mean *things*. Money in the bank, missiles in the silo, diplomas on the wall—

<sup>3</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Choosing Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p. 97.

and you rest securely in the arms of God. You know instinctively that nothing is sure but the love of God.”<sup>4</sup>

The Americans had expected to be viewed with suspicion—after all the two nations were virtually at war—but they were astounded by the ways in which they were embraced by these people. They found themselves drawn eagerly into their worship, swaying to the strange rhythms of the joyful hymns, laughing and clapping to the beat of tambourines with a new-found freedom. So much so, that at one evening service the pastor of the Church of God, Eddie Peralta, leaned over to Joanna and said, “I think the devil is having a real bad time seeing us worship together this way. I think this is a bad day for the devil.”

At one point in their trip, Eddie took them to a small house in the village where the church had Bible study. It was just one room with a few rough benches and a handmade chalk board. All around there were signs of distress: the poverty of the housing, the signs of war’s destruction, a few scrawny chickens running through the yards, and everywhere the haunting faces of hunger. On the doorway to the house someone had written, in Spanish, the words, “Who lives?” Eddie then opened the door to show, written in the same hand on the inside of the door, “Jesu Christo.” Jesus Christ lives.

On the hinges of that door in Nicaragua swings the shifting of the ages. Where are we? In the age of “Who lives?” Why are we here? Jesu Christo!—because Jesus Christ lives!

<sup>4</sup> From a sermon by Joanna Adams, “Dear Eddie,” preached March 20, 1988, at North Decatur Presbyterian Church, Decatur, Georgia.

# For Jonathan's Sake: The Morality of Memory

by MICHAEL ERIC DYSON

*An ordained Baptist minister, Michael Eric Dyson is associate director of the Religious Action Plan on Poverty, and adjunct faculty member, Hartford Seminary. He is also completing a Ph.D. in ethics at Princeton University. Mr. Dyson's sermon was preached on April 20, 1988, at a worship service in Miller Chapel sponsored by the Association of Black Seminarians of Princeton Seminary.*

Text: 2 Samuel 9:1-8

GRATITUDE, CERTAINLY, must count as one of the central virtues of the Christian faith. The posture of appreciation for a kind and helpful word spoken, or a hospitable gesture performed is consistently affirmed throughout the Bible. In one respect, this is so because the biblical conception of gratitude derives from an explicit acknowledgment that, in James's words, "all that is good, everything that is perfect . . . is given from above" (Jas. 1:17). Thus, the origin of the many manifestations of mercy, kindness, justice, peace, and love may be traced back to God, the ultimate source of whatever form of prosperity we may enjoy.

Of course, the possibility of gratitude often depends on the ability (but most likely the willingness) to recall an act or a pattern of love and sacrifice revealed to us through the life of a person, the generosity of an institution, or the richness of a tradition. To be thankful, then, requires that we remember. The powerful and fruitful manner in which memory and gratitude are linked is seen in our present text.

This text, along with chapter 10 of 2 Samuel, though, is generally regarded as uninteresting, and peripheral to the meaning of the larger narrative. However, I think there are powerful truths tucked away in the folds of this neglected passage, and hopefully, with the proper homiletical twists and textual shakes, we will nudge them free for our inspection and inspiration.

This text opens with David's question, "Is there anyone still left of Saul's family so that I can show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" The immediate background of this text's place in relation to the larger narrative makes it all the more remarkable and intriguing. Recorded in 1 Samuel 16:1 through 2 Samuel 5:5 are the astounding features, the broad and bold lineaments, of David's feats of greatness which expanded his popularity to iconographical proportions. David is indeed the central figure in Israel's mem-

ory. He is one of a class of historic personalities who, as Walter Brueggemann says, "has a literary future." That is to say that David's memory is generative, is seminal, continually producing stories that testify to his towering stature.

Any perusal of the narrative indicates why David reigns as such a stellar figure in Israel's history. As a young lad shepherding his family's sheep, he entered Saul's army and immediately confronted the menacing specter that loomed large against his people in the form of a grotesque giant, Goliath. At first accepting, then rejecting, traditional armor, David instead opted for the tools of his own trade which had served him well in protecting innocent sheep from preying wolves.

So with five smooth stones, and a slingshot, David hurled the hope and honor of his people against this gargantuan threat and behemoth brutality symbolized in Goliath's presence. Goliath fell to David's calculated and precise assault, as did the entire nation of Israel to his potent charisma and his enormous *chutzpa*. As with Martin Luther King, Jr., centuries later in Montgomery after the bus boycott, this event catapulted David into the national spotlight, and for a long stretch, after the intervening period when he was a victim of Saul's jealousy, he passed from victory to victory.

And in the midst of this pleasant and plush atmosphere, in the midst of being thoroughly ensconced in a niche of political and national importance, in the midst of being celebrated as the hero of Israel and the apple of God's eye, if you will permit me the use of a "sanctified imagination," a thought must have crossed David's mind about his past, especially when times were lean and life was vicious. To his credit, the bright sun of his current prosperity did not totally eclipse from his view the terror of his past predicament.

Some shivering moment in the midst of his opulence called David down from the ecstatic heights of unalloyed joy, and forced him to mix his thoughts with the pain and poverty of his former life. Those were not days visited with an unmitigated *joie de vivre*, and those were certainly not nights bathed in peaceful benediction. No, those were "harried days and haunted nights" spent in feverish flight from the pathological pursuit of an insanely jealous political chieftain, who, to make matters worse, was the father of his best friend.

We can understand David's mode of thought and empathize with his mood of being. In the center of every thundering victory, of every howling success, of every mountain-top experience, there is a still small voice that beckons us to recall our roots, to measure ourselves against the youthful

idealism that started our journeys, and to see ourselves in light of what, and who, and where, we once were. For David, the image of his struggles toward maturity, of his treacherous trek to becoming the dominant presence in a nation, were conjured up and evoked by one word: Jonathan.

In a startlingly visceral manner, David understood that he hadn't made it to his present position without the love, trust, loyalty, support, belief, and faith of his late friend Jonathan. By raising his question—"Is there anyone still left of Saul's family so that I can show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"—David provides due recognition for the central significance of Jonathan's contribution to his, and really Israel's, life.

In a real sense, we have an ethical imperative to remember those persons, ideas, institutions, and traditions that have shaped our lives in the most profound ways. There is a moral dimension to our memories, in selectively recalling who and what helped us be what we are today. The example of the Bible often warns against a pernicious amnesia, a flawed forgetfulness that preempts the proper expression of gratitude, especially in the face of some good fortune we presently enjoy.

How tragic it was, for instance, when Joseph was wrongly jailed, and further wronged by an ungrateful lapse of memory. The cupbearer and chief baker of the pharaoh were also jailed with Joseph. He was kind enough to interpret their dreams, which foretold the baker's death and the cupbearer's restoration after their release from prison. Joseph asked the cupbearer upon his release to "be sure to remember me when things go well with you, and do me the kindness of reminding Pharaoh about me, to get me out of this house" (Gn. 40:14). But after the cupbearer's release from prison, "the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him" (Gn. 40:23).

This example has particular importance for African-Americans in late twentieth-century American culture. We must recall, and not forget, how we have arrived where we are. We must accentuate the need for memory, for being grateful for past luminaries and movements that have shaped our community from one era to another. Berry and Blassingame in their recent history of Afro-Americans, *Long Memory*, indicate that for our slave forebears, memory itself became an instrument of survival. They passed from generation to generation the great practices, rich traditions, and strong beliefs that sustained them through cruel circumstances and devastating days.

The tragedy is that so often we have forgotten "how we got over." When we survey the plight of our present African-American life, we are able to observe the consequences of forgetting. Our inner cities more closely resem-



ble bombed war zones than inhabitable and thriving spaces of residency. A sizable portion of our communities has been seized by the subversive presence of drug pushers, who sell our black youth temporary tickets to euphoria, and often permanent passes to prison. The shift away from non-skilled labor in postindustrial American work, and the growing stature of the steel collar, automated technology, are continually depleting the already weakened economic base of most black families and communities. Unemployment rates are staggering, drop-out rates are demeaning, and the level of literacy is constantly declining.

These harsh and bitter circumstances for most Africans in America have tested our moral resolve, our spiritual resources, and most acutely, our communal memories. But we must remember that even under the most inhumane assaults of slavery and racism, black identity, though severely challenged, was maintained. This remembering can fuel the engines of desire to reconstruct the infrastructure of black communities, and redesign coping mechanisms to fit our present circumstances.

When we recall both our collective and individual past, it reminds us that we have not gotten where we are alone. None of us is self-made or self-produced. All of us owe some Jonathan, whether a person, institution, or tradition, for contributing to our lives. All of us are the beneficiaries of others who have sacrificed for us, loved us, and worked for us.

Our parents have worked for long hours, often in conditions that defy our imaginative powers to portray their tedium and sometimes outright cruelty. Our older siblings have sacrificed their chance for a higher education so that younger ones could matriculate in college. Some wise senior citizen pushed past the cantankerous and childish temperament we displayed to see the cry for attention, feeding our need for importance. Some teacher has given us books to read, to stretch our minds and deepen our thinking, compelling us to exceed low expectations and rise to educational excellence. Some minister or pastor has rescued us from the ennui and spiritual stupor of unfocused life plans by uttering a word of advice and direction that lifted the fog of doubt and permitted the sun to rise on our hopes and dreams. Some bosom friend has heard our frustrations and fears, our angers and anxieties, and has encouraged us to do our best. All of us have benefited from such persons.

Jonathan did this for David. Jonathan introduced himself to David and apparently assumed a major responsibility for their relationship. Jonathan loved David as his own soul. Jonathan stripped off his cloak, sword, bow, and girdle and gave them to David. Jonathan interceded on David's behalf

with his father Saul, who desired to destroy David. Jonathan listened to David's agonies and acted to save him.

With David, therefore, we recognize that at the deepest level of our lives we are debtors. Like David, we should remember our Jonathans, and be grateful for what they have done for us, for nothing approaches the opprobrium of ingratitude. David realized this, and for Jonathan's sake, he wanted to show kindness as a result of what Jonathan had meant to him.

A deep truth about life emerges when we consider how David sought to express his gratitude. As is the case with us at times, David was unable to return gratitude directly to Jonathan, but, for Jonathan's sake, he sought to pass it on. Thus, David sought out Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, to support him for Jonathan's sake. One way of expressing gratitude is to support and encourage the heir and legacy of the persons, traditions, and institutions that have benefited us.

This is why African-Americans in particular, and Americans in general, should express gratitude for the blood that was shed in the civil rights movement, for the hundreds of thousands of miles walked, for the blisters, bruises, and cuts, the loss of jobs, limbs, and even lives through brutal assassinations. We pay homage and render gratitude by supporting the "offspring," the legacy, of the civil rights movement, by continuing to explore and extend the ideas espoused during that period in our national history. We continue to devote our intellectual, spiritual, and financial resources to the identification and eradication of racism and classism in American culture. For our Jonathan's sake, for the movement's sake, we must continue to expand our knowledge and insight about the need for social justice, economic rehabilitation, and redistribution of resources. For the movement's sake, we must continue to fight for the preciousness of life and the fundamental dignity and sacredness of all human beings.

This is why we as progressive Christians affirm that the movement for the realization of women's freedom has benefited us all. Thus, for Jonathan's sake, the women's movement's sake, we must continue to resist the patriarchal norms that constrain the social mobility, contain the vocational aspirations, and conceal the political destiny of women. For Jonathan's sake, the women's movement's sake, we must continually wrestle with the structure of our language, and concede the rightful inconvenience of all demands for equality, justice, and freedom. Like David we must, for our Jonathan's sake, express gratitude by supporting the liberating traditions, which are the legacies of those who have helped us.

David's commitment to Mephibosheth was *for* Jonathan's sake and not

*because* he was perfect. In fact, he was crippled in both feet. He was handicapped. Like all of us, he was flawed. Hence the demand for perfect people and causes to which we can commit ourselves, even if they are the legacies of those who have aided us, is misled. Although we must strive for excellence, we must not demand perfection, because all of us are handicapped and crippled in some manner. And any institution to which we belong, any organization or tradition in which we participate, is imperfect.

The church is not perfect, because human beings constitute its membership. We are members of the church because we have been called together in common acknowledgment of our need for God's guidance. Even though we are the community of the redeemed, we remain, in varying degrees, plagued by the problems of our human nature. Robert McAfee Brown is right in observing that the church is like Noah's ark: if it wasn't for the storm on the outside, we couldn't stand the stink on the inside. We are here for God's sake, because God extended to us the life of Jesus.

This point is also instructive when we reflect on a phenomenon that has engulfed and galvanized much of the black community: the Jackson presidential campaign. The Jackson campaign has already in a fundamental way transformed the shape and contours of modern politics. And for those seeking an explanation of the way it has affected the majority of African-Americans, it is helpful to see that the Jackson campaign has generated a profound sense of renewed pride, and offered hope to black people that justice may yet be done in America. It represents the most powerful coalition of blacks and other progressives since the time of the civil rights movement.

But we are not blind. It is not a perfect movement. And Jackson is not a perfect man. He is Mephibosheth, crippled and handicapped. But like Mephibosheth he is the recipient of our attention and commitment not simply because of who he is, in the strict sense, but because of the tradition he is related to, and heir of. We are committed for Jonathan's sake, in this case, for all those African-Americans and other progressives who fought for the right to eat at any lunch counter, drink at any water fountain, to ride any bus, to go to any park, to live in any neighborhood, and to be able to vote for any person we choose.

We support Jackson's coalition for the sake of those who walked when they could have ridden, bled when they could have fought, prayed when they could have punched, and loved when they could have hated. All of their efforts in part looked forward to this unimaginable possibility. So it is not for Jesse's sake alone, but really for Martin, for Rosa, and Malcolm; for Pauli Murray, for Medgar, and for Fannie Lou Hamer; for four little girls

blown up in a Birmingham church, and for Rustin, Forman, and Angela Davis; and for James Baldwin and Harold Washington and all the unnamed saints who sacrificed their talent, energy, and for some, even their lives.

The story of Jonathan, David, and Mephibosheth reminds us of the moral nature of memory, of remembering those persons, ideas, and traditions whose contributions to our lives have been deep and abiding. Of course, this is not at all alien to our larger experience as Christians. We know that it is not for our sakes that the love of God is spread generously and mercifully across our lives; not for our sakes alone that we receive the gifts and talents that we possess. But it is for God's sake, for the sake of Jesus, who died on Calvary, that we live, move, and have our being. May we remember, and never forget.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Amos, William E., Jr. *When AIDS Comes to Church*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988. Pp. 130. \$9.95.

Shelp, Earl E., and Ronald H. Sunderland. *AIDS and the Church*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987. Pp. 151. \$8.95.

Sunderland, Ronald H., and Earl E. Shelp. *AIDS, A Manual for Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987. Pp. 76. \$6.95.

The authors of the three volumes under review are men with a mission and an Ancient Mariner's tale to tell. The mission is to persuade the church to respond with compassion to persons suffering from AIDS. Their tale to tell is one of pain made only barely endurable by the courageous love often manifest among those with whom they have ministered.

Shelp and Sunderland's two volumes are essential for pastors who want thorough and reliable information about the disease itself and its effects on the primary and secondary sufferers. In addition they provide sound biblical, theological, and ethical resources for thinking through AIDS ministry.

Amos's book is important because of its honest description of a pastor's gut education and its prescription for guiding a congregation in responding to AIDS. The three volumes overlap regarding both information and pastoral advice. Their authors' vocational locations as medical ethicist, hospital chaplain, and parish minister provide illuminating perspectives on pastoral care.

The first two chapters of *AIDS and the Church* provide the most concise yet complete description of the current realities of AIDS known to this reviewer. By simply reporting what is known about AIDS and what happens to patients, family, and care givers, Shelp and Sunderland convey the enormity of this epidemic with urgency but without sensationalism. Even so, as one reads of the inexorable physical progress of the disease and then of the psychosocial effects on the patient and others affected, one's growing depression is a good clue to why pastors and the churches have been slow to respond to this crisis. And one's admiration for the authors and others who have engaged this scourge increases.

The three authors attempt to mobilize the church's response by focusing on Christ's response to those who suffer. Shelp and Sunderland devote a chapter to "God and the poor" in an effort to include homosexual and intravenous drug-using sufferers from AIDS among the "poor" for whom God has special concern. Their model is, of course, Jesus' own ministry of inclusiveness toward those despised by the economically secure and the religiously righteous.

In *AIDS and the Church*, Shelp and Sunderland devote a chapter to "illness in Christian perspective," in which they seek to demolish theologies that interpret illness as God-given opportunities for spiritual maturing or as retribution for sin. They draw on process theology to establish the notion that God's involvement with



creation is always toward the maximum good possible under the conditions of freedom and responsibility.

Amos grounds his call for loving response in the initiatory response of the welcoming father to the returned prodigal. He shares Shelp and Sunderland's conviction that ministry to victims and their families must be unconditional, avoiding the temptation to condemn persons for the lifestyle realities that may have contributed to contracting AIDS.

Shelp, Sunderland, and Amos want congregations to minister inclusively to primary and secondary AIDS victims. In addition Shelp and Sunderland make a strong case for ecumenical strategies to combat the widespread social stigma attached to the disease. Amos's attention is focused more exclusively on involving individual congregations.

Although Amos's approach is no less courageous or compassionate toward individual sufferers, in the end his work is contradictory as regards homosexual victims of AIDS. Unlike Shelp and Sunderland, whose language conveys acceptance of gay and lesbian lifestyles, Amos does not suggest the possibility of the moral legitimacy of the homosexual orientation. Even when he is calling for nonjudgmental compassion for people who are dying, he tends toward a pejorative attitude toward homosexuality itself.

For example, on page 54 he says, "We must not operate on a theological conclusion based on the assumption that AIDS is simply a gay disease and is God's punishment to that particular group of people. We must . . . focus on the fact that people with AIDS are people who are dying." Fair enough. But in his next sentence he states, "Some of them have contracted the disease through such sexual activity as homosexuality, bisexuality, adultery and promiscuity. No matter." The subtle linkage of sexual orientation with immoral sexual behavior undermines his nonjudgmental intention.

Amos writes within a denomination that has been unyieldingly condemnatory of the gay and lesbian orientation. One wonders how a congregation that shares this theological opposition to even monogamous, committed homosexual relationships can fully minister to gay AIDS patients and their loved ones. Amos writes poignantly of how the immediate relatives of a gay young man thought it would inflict too severe a wound on other family members if they knew the homosexual circumstances of the young man's life and death. The pastor respected their wishes for confidentiality. The funeral was conducted not in the young man's gay congregation but in the family's "traditional" one, where no mention was made of his lifestyle, of the disease that killed him, nor of the Christian community in which he was most wholly affirmed.

This incident is reported to illustrate the need for confidentiality in AIDS ministry. The pathos of such alienation seems to this reviewer a severe judgment on the ethos of most "traditional" denominations, which continues to stigmatize gay and lesbian sexual orientation.

Amos, Shelp, and Sunderland are advocates for compassion and education, not polemicists. And no doubt their call to involvement with suffering persons must be the starting point for significant changes in attitudes and belief. Eventually, such pastors and thinkers must lead the Christian community also to understand and critique its role in sustaining the ideological, social, and economic conditions that contribute to drug addiction and to the stigmatization of gay and lesbian persons.

*AIDS and the Church* and *When AIDS Comes to Church* should be regarded as must reading for clergy who want to respond effectively to the AIDS crisis. General competence in pastoral care should not be assumed to transfer without special preparation to ministry to the homosexual persons and intravenous drug users who are currently the primary victims of AIDS. *AIDS, A Manual for Pastoral Care* is a very concise introduction, with brief, helpful chapters on grief and on ethical issues related to AIDS.

NELSON S. T. THAYER  
Drew University

Jordan, Merle R. *Taking on the Gods: The Task of the Pastoral Counselor*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986. Pp. 160. \$10.95.

Using the theme of "taking on the gods" Merle Jordan provides an innovative model for the theological understanding, assessment, and clinical care of pastoral-counseling clients experiencing neurotic problems (primarily problems of overresponsibility and guilt). Jordan defines taking on the gods as "confronting those psychic structures, forces, and images which masquerade as God" and finds this to be central to the task of pastoral counseling. Jordan then develops this theme in a variety of directions. Using sensitive and insightful illustrations from his counseling experience, he demonstrates the tasks of the clinical theologian/pastoral counselor in working with individuals, couples, families, and systems. He focuses on two problems in particular—the resistance to changing destructive patterns and the pervasive problem of depression—and uses these problems as contexts for developing his clinical theology.

Jordan provides some very specific and helpful categories through which the pastoral counselor can assess the problems or "false idols" that are blocking the person's life. He proposes, for example, that the pastoral counselor help the client identify the "secular scriptures" and "secular prayers" that function in his or her life. These assumptions, goals, and beliefs are generally outside of the person's awareness, and by exposing them the counselor helps the client to have some choice about claiming them. He also uses concepts such as family idols, scapegoats, and household gods as useful categories for uncovering power dynamics that have held the person to an unhealthy lifestyle. These terms are much more than theological labels for psychological problems. Rather, they express the foundation of Jordan's clinical theology, which, in essence, is that lives that have false gods at their centers

are unbalanced and destructive. By using theological language and categories, both counselor and client are reminded that the problem with which they are struggling is essentially a religious one.

Jordan has drawn eclectically from a number of psychological theories in developing this clinical theology. The psychological foundation appears to be built primarily from psychodynamic, object relations, cognitive, and family systems theories. These theories are used appropriately and helpfully except where Jordan switches between therapeutic metaphors from differing schools of thought without explanation or transition. This can become confusing. Some familiarity with a variety of schools of psychotherapy is helpful to gain the most benefit from Jordan's work.

*Taking on the Gods* provides a clinical theology that can be appropriately used in a variety of clinical contexts. However, although Jordan touches on some of the larger social issues such as classism, racism, and sexism, he tends to remain focused on a more individual and family level. The book would be improved if it could be expanded to address the role of pastoral counseling in the midst of social idolatry as well. Jordan only hints at this possibility.

One of the book's most helpful aspects is that it persistently reminds the pastoral counselor that her or his own neuroses function to get in the way of hearing the religious issues and the faulty assumptions of the clients. The pastoral counselor, according to Jordan, must be willing to challenge her or his own false gods and "secular scriptures" in order to helpfully invite others to explore theirs. This is a very important reminder and invitation.

*Taking on the Gods* offers effective guidance to the pastoral counselor. It accomplishes what it sets out to do—by content, clinical illustrations, and style it offers to the reader a framework for developing a significant clinical theology for doing pastoral counseling. It is a valuable addition to the continuing integrative work of psychology and theology.

CHRISTIE COZAD NEUGER  
Princeton Theological Seminary

Scharfenberg, Joachim. *Pastoral Care as Dialogue*. Translated by O. C. Dean, Jr. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987. Pp. 156. \$10.95.

According to its author, the purpose of the book *Pastoral Care as Dialogue* is twofold. On the one hand, the book attempts to engage in theoretical inquiry around some of the most significant issues in pastoral theology today—issues that include addressing integration in a time of rampant methodological pluralism; exploring appropriate theological categories through which to assess psychological theory; and examining the psychoanalytic-dialogical method as a particularly apt tool through which to facilitate both human freedom and human responsibility. On the other hand, the book seeks to offer specific, pragmatic guidance to beginning pastoral counselors on how to engage in effective care and counseling with parish-

ioners. The result, although fragmented and sometimes self-contradictory, is a very astute description of the dynamics of good pastoral counseling seen within the theological and theoretical implications of psychoanalytic theory.

Joachim Scharfenberg begins his book with a philosophical discussion of the role of dialogue in pastoral counseling. He delineates how other writers have misused the concept of dialogue in a variety of ways. This discussion is somewhat hampered by both its historical datedness (first written in 1972) and its geographical context (West Germany), as the author acknowledges. However, within these limits, Scharfenberg develops a theory of dialogue in light of his primary theological categories of healing and of freedom. He feels that dialogue as a healing phenomenon has been too long ignored as a theme in pastoral counseling. He grounds his understanding of dialogue in many of the scriptural accounts that describe the word of Jesus as healing. He is clear that the role of the pastoral counselor is not to duplicate the authority of Jesus in speaking the healing word, but rather to allow the exchange of words in pastoral dialogue to free the client from fear and anxiety in order for new life to emerge.

Scharfenberg's primary argument is that dialogue can only exist when certain conditions are met. Primary among these is the fact that dialogue presupposes mutuality and partnership. This does not mean that there is always a symmetry of function but that both parties of the dialogue enter into it without a fixed goal and without authoritative expectations. The purpose of the pastoral-counseling dialogue is to enhance the freedom of the partners (particularly the client)—especially freedom understood psychoanalytically as freedom from inner conflict and its consequent anxiety.

From this base, Scharfenberg goes on to describe a variety of dialogue forms out of which is built the pastoral dialogue. After describing three forms of dialogue—the open dialogue, the teaching dialogue, and the exploring dialogue—all of which fit well with his psychoanalytically based model, he goes on to describe the helping relationship. This is based on the casework model of social work and is also considered an integral part of his pastoral-counseling paradigm. This inclusion of the helping relationship strains the psychoanalytic norms that are clear throughout the book, and its integration into the model of pastoral dialogue is left unfinished. Pragmatically, however, the helping relationship is added to the model to assist the pastor, who does not have the training or the time to engage in the long-term demands of psychoanalysis, with helping the people who come to her or him in need. It is, therefore, useful, but somewhat jarring to the unity of the theoretical and theological discussion.

It is in this pragmatic or guiding dimension of the book that Scharfenberg is most helpful. He offers many sharp insights into the dynamics of the counseling relationship and guides the new pastoral counselor through some of the most common counseling errors. He uses case examples and clear guidelines to illustrate the most helpful ways to form relationships, to assist the client in open dialogue, to ask



appropriate questions, and to lead the client toward seeing new options and making empowering choices. These words of instruction are helpfully inviting and stimulating.

The primary limits of this work, in addition to those listed above, are the limits that can be applied to psychoanalytic models in general. One of those is the restricted, intrapsychic focus, which does not address the role of the client's most important systems in maintaining "symptoms." The theory set forth here assumes that, with enough inner connections and insights, the client can let go of destructive behavior. This does not take the insights and implications of general systems theory seriously enough. Another related limit is that this intrapsychic narrowness does not adequately consider the pathology of the social system in which the person is living. Symptoms often need to be re-interpreted in light of that pathology. It may be that the datedness of the book is such that neither general and family systems theories nor social critiques were available to the author, as he does briefly allude to both of these limits.

On the whole, however, *Pastoral Care as Dialogue* is a stimulating and insightful book for both beginning and more experienced pastoral counselors.

CHRISTIE COZAD NEUGER  
Princeton Theological Seminary

Maitland, David J. *Aging: A Time for New Learning*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987. Pp. 133. \$9.95.

This book, by the former professor of religion and chaplain at Carlton College, is of the genre of wisdom literature. It is a semiautobiographical reflection on confronting old age, full of realism and sound advice, but not so darkly textured as one of its main prototypes, the book of Ecclesiastes. Maitland does believe that old age is a time for new learning, as the subtitle indicates, but he is also realistic about the limitations brought on by aging. He correctly points out that many things cannot be learned earlier in life. In old age it is especially important to balance work, love, play, and worship, instead of placing so much emphasis on work as does our culture.

Maitland stresses the deepening of religious experience in later life, using the image of God as a key idea, along with deeper knowledge of self.

What I came to see in this process of self-acquaintance, during which my understanding of God underwent a sea change, is that God has implanted in us some sense of the direction in which lives made in God's image should mature. The image has not been obliterated and experience may help us to recognize it. There is no assurance that we will so use our freedom; the evidence to the contrary is often seemingly overwhelming. But the lure of a deeper more connected, loving life is ineradicable in every person.



In this passage we can find some of Maitland's main themes in close juxtaposition, which is the way he tends to write about them. Human freedom is both possibility and limit. The lure of God is toward a deeper connectedness, an important insight for the aging who tend, all too often, toward isolation.

He offers five lessons from longevity: perspectives change; life patterns become potentially clearer; there are "golden flecks among the ashes" (memories of happy moments); we do not control God's presence or absence; and faith mandates endless inventiveness. While none of these is original and may well be familiar themes to the reader, they are nonetheless trustworthy guidelines for productive and hope-filled aging.

Even though the style is a bit choppy, in some measure because of Maitland's determination to take the realities of human existence rather constantly into account, this volume can offer a challenge to many who have found that a lifetime of striving has left them drained for the more subtle, and more varied, tasks of old age.

JAMES N. LAPSLEY  
Princeton Theological Seminary

Harris, J. Gordon. *Biblical Perspectives on Aging: God and the Elderly*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987. Pp. 144. \$9.95.

This volume, written by the vice-president for academic affairs and professor of Old Testament at North American Baptist Seminary, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, for the *Overtures to Biblical Theology* series, provides us with an overview of the treatment of key themes regarding the nature of God in relation to the elderly in the diverse literature of the Bible. Harris indicates that there are three major themes of this kind in the Bible: (1) God as agent of blessing, (2) God the protector of social structures, and (3) God the proponent of justice. After a discussion of the common theology of the ancient Near East and the attitudes associated with it, he proceeds to show how Israel's understanding of these three major themes both resembles and differs from this common theology.

Harris finds that Israel goes beyond the common theology of the ancient Near East in emphasizing the respect due the elderly as a part of the more general respect for political structures and tradition found generally. Also, the Hebrew scriptures stress the obligations of the society as a whole to all handicapped persons in the name of justice to a much greater degree than do the neighbors of the Israelites, and this includes the elderly who are often also handicapped. This emphasis on justice for all persons is linked to the history of the Israelites as captives in Egypt. Both parents are to be treated equally. Israel, more than its neighbors, emphasized the relationship to God as a key element in the treatment of the elderly by their children, especially in the wisdom literature.

In practice the elderly were not always treated in accordance with these ideals,

of course. Harris found a decline in the power of the elderly and the respect accorded them in the period of the monarchy, and something of a restoration of these in the postexilic period.

In the New Testament the radical eschatology of the synoptic gospels and the letters of Paul provides a strong note of ambiguity about the regard of the elderly. Older persons are not to stand in the way of response to the newness of the gospel, even though in other respects they continue to be held in high regard. Reciprocal obligations between parent and children are emphasized.

Harris has provided us with a valuable guide to biblical attitudes about aging. He is careful in his use of various ancient materials, but manages to cull from both canonical and noncanonical sources themes about the elderly which are not always apparent on the surface, since aging as such is seldom the main topic of discussion in these sources. Although there are clearly differences between our society and those of the ancient Near East, I believe that Harris is right in his contention that we can still learn from the Bible some points about the treatment of the elderly, particularly the need to value the elderly and respect them, and about the need for the aging to continue to grow in wisdom.

I found that Harris was better able to document themes of respect for the elderly in relation to the social order and justice of the elderly in the Bible than he was the theme of blessing. Although the elderly are included among the people of God who are to be blessed, there does not seem to be an unambiguous message that the elderly as such are blessed. Even the righteous with many descendants may suffer, as the biblical materials acknowledge.

JAMES N. LAPSLEY  
Princeton Theological Seminary

Peacocke, Arthur. *God and the New Biology*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. 197. \$19.95.

As an Anglican priest and an eminent biochemist, Arthur Peacocke personifies dialogue between Christian faith and scientific insight. His latest book, *God and the New Biology*, focuses on these issues: evolution, the ecological interrelatedness of all living things, reductionism, sociobiology, and the relationship between thermodynamics and evolution—all in reference to Christian theology. On these topics, this is an unusually helpful book.

"What is it to be a Christian theist in a post-Darwinian world?" Peacocke asks (p. 87). The answer is found, he believes, in viewing God the creator as intimately involved in the creative processes, which the science of biology seeks to describe. Furthermore, to be a Christian today means to recognize that all creatures, ourselves included, are evolved through these natural processes and are thus related to each other.

Christian theology, Peacocke believes, has much to learn from the field of biol-

ogy. But theology must not accept the current state of the field without challenge. Principally, the challenge Peacocke raises is against the tendency toward reductionism among natural scientists, including biologists. Reductionism in biology is the attempt to explain living things in the language of physics and chemistry. The theological stake is great, for if reductionism is presumed true, it makes little sense to talk about human personhood and freedom or anything else religious. Unlike the misguided religious fight over evolution, the challenge of reductionism is serious and real.

Peacocke counters reductionism by granting that scientists properly work by reducing complex wholes to their simplest or constitutive parts. But they must not make the metaphysical assumption that the part is more real than the whole. For instance, the molecules of our brains are not more real than our personhood, nor are the subatomic "particles" more real than the molecules. To explain nature most adequately, it is legitimate and indeed necessary to use levels of explanation that are not reducible to physics or chemistry. Peacocke offers examples of nonreducible explanations from current research, including his own.

Sociobiology, which seeks to understand human behavioral tendencies in evolutionary terms, is often accused of reducing culture to biological origins. Peacocke concurs but recognizes that this young science is nonetheless very suggestive and "that theology has, in my view, a new and exciting role to play if it will only recognize its new brief" (p. 115).

While Peacocke's boldness in bridging the worlds of science and theology is to be commended, and while his achievement is generally very helpful to the Christian theology of the future, his view of God's relationship to the evolutionary process is problematic. The problem hinges on his identification of the biological evolutionary process as the work of God: "So we have to identify God's action with the processes themselves, as they are revealed by the physical and biological sciences, and this identification means we must stress more than ever before God's *immanence* in the world" (p. 95).

Clearly, Peacocke intends to balance this emphasis on immanence with a strong assertion of divine transcendence. Nonetheless, his view fails to maintain an adequate distinction between God and the world. To *identify* God's activity with the evolutionary process is to ascribe this world, as it is, to God. Classic theologians ascribed the *original* creation to God, but they insisted that the fall introduces discord throughout the entire creation. The loss of a historic fall in post-Darwinian theology makes it difficult to speak of God in the creative process without morally implicating God in the creation's turmoil or reducing God to nothing but a unifying symbol for the evolutionary process. These tendencies must be resisted in post-Darwinian Christianity. As difficult as it may be, theology must portray God as creating through natural processes and yet as morally (and therefore redemptively) opposed to some of what arises through those processes. Likewise, God must be seen as one whose purposes always transcend (rather than collapse into) the accom-

plishments of the evolutionary process. This tension cannot be maintained if one identifies God, as Peacocke has done, with the natural processes themselves.

Nevertheless, *God and the New Biology* is a worthy successor to Peacocke's masterly *Creation and the World of Science* (1979); together, they are extremely helpful guides to an emerging field in theology.

RONALD COLE-TURNER

Memphis Theological Seminary

Damrosch, David. *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. 362. \$21.95.

In recent years there has been a flood of "literary" studies of the Bible. Some of these studies have produced very sensitive, stimulating, and even compelling readings of the biblical texts treated. One thinks especially of the works of such masters as Robert Alter and Meir Sternberg. On the other hand, these literary studies characteristically disparage traditional biblical criticism in a rather arrogant disregard of the historical and literary milieu in which the biblical text came into existence. Too often the received Hebrew text of a biblical book is treated as the unified creative work of a single author, precisely as a modern literary work would be, despite overwhelming evidence that many of these biblical texts are composite works put together from disparate sources. The assumption of this fictive unity typically results in strained and unconvincing literary interpretations of the artistic function of seams, contradictions, and doublets, and this casual masking of difficulties in the text is often combined with a flippant disdain for the traditional and, in my opinion, more adequate source-critical explanations of these phenomena. It was with pleasure, therefore, that I discovered that David Damrosch's new literary study is exceptional. Damrosch adapts the best insights of modern "literary" study to the historical and literary realities of the ancient Near East and Israel. He is quite conversant with contemporary assyriological and critical biblical scholarship, particularly for someone who professionally stands outside the field—Damrosch is associate professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University—and he writes with an irenic, though thoroughly critical, spirit that is worthy of emulation.

Covenant in the title of his book refers to the contract between an author and reader implicit in an author's choice of a particular genre, since a genre represents "the framework of norms and expectations shaping both the composition and the reception of a text" (p. 2). Since Damrosch is interested in tracing the historical development of biblical narrative, he is concerned with the uses, adaptations, transformations, and even repressions of genres during "the history of the composition and rewriting of biblical narrative" (p. 2), and this historical study of genre requires a close integration of three separate fields: "the comparative study of Near Eastern literature, the historical study of the sources within the biblical texts, and literary



analysis of the text as it develops into its canonical form" (pp. 2-3). Damrosch shows himself a master in all three endeavors.

His comparative study of Near Eastern literature in the first three chapters of his book is particularly brilliant. He offers a fascinating reading of the Gilgamesh epic that takes account of the differences between the older Old Babylonian version and the late Neo-Assyrian version, differences that lead him to convincingly characterize the late version as "the story of the loss of myth and the gain of history." The late version, while recounting the story of the flood and Utnapishtim's subsequent receipt of immortality, makes that gift and Utnapishtim's whole mythical world inaccessible to Gilgamesh; he must be satisfied with the immortality that historical achievements can bring, with the enduring monument of the city walls of Shurupak. If this is a move from myth to epic, the biblical reworking of the old creation-flood epic in Genesis 2-11, with its radical questioning of human cultural achievements and especially the founding of cities, produces an anti-epic. The way is opened for Israelite historiography's characteristic probing of the ambiguities of all earthly institutions.

Damrosch's historical study of the sources within the biblical texts is less convincing, but still impressive. Contemporary biblical scholarship offers no consensus on the disputed questions of the identification and date of Pentateuchal sources, the identification and date of older literary sources in the books of 1 Samuel-2 Kings, or on the date and extent of the deuteronomistic editing in these same books. Damrosch is thoroughly conversant with the recent inconclusive discussion and tends to take mediating positions between more traditional views and the revisionist views of such scholars as H. H. Schmid and John Van Seters. An interesting example of such a mediating view is his argument, based on the radical mixing of genres in the Pentateuch, that several units traditionally assigned to J may have originated independently of one another in the early period, but were only joined together in the exile. Perhaps because this ground is so treacherous, Damrosch tries to phrase his literary argument in such a way that it will stand even if it is necessary to revise his historical judgments about the sources, but as he admits, this is not altogether possible.

It is partly the inescapable intertwining of this historical study of the sources and their literary analysis that makes Damrosch's performance of this third task seem weaker by comparison. In his literary analysis of the text Damrosch is sometimes careless about the sources. His attempt to draw parallels between the David story and its Yahwistic model seems strained (pp. 201-2), partly because circumcision as the sign of the covenant is not found in J, but in P. He also follows the current fad of the pandeuteronomists by assigning material to the deuteronomistic historian without feeling any necessity to demonstrate the presence of deuteronomistic language. His treatment of 1 Kings 1-2 as a deuteronomistic creation to bridge the David and Solomon stories is a case in point, and, in my opinion, prevents an adequate literary analysis of the succession narrative. Partly the flaw is in his literary



analysis itself, however. At times he tends to overinterpret and strain for literary parallels. To mention just a few examples, the assumed parallel between Jonathan and Jonadab based on the similarity in the meaning of the names is totally unconvincing (p. 243), the alleged wordplay on *midbar* involving the homonymns "wilderness" and "mouth" is highly dubious (p. 296), and the language of Genesis 34:18 and 1 Samuel 18:26 is not really close enough to suggest conscious modeling (pp. 201-2). Damrosch's treatment of Hebrew tenses (p. 282) is also misleading. Despite these critical remarks, however, there is much to commend in Damrosch's literary analysis. Sometimes it is brilliant, as in his fine analysis of the ark narrative, and even where it is flawed in detail, as in his treatment of David and Jonathan in the Goliath episode, there remains much that is both new and convincing.

In his conclusion Damrosch engages Alter in a fascinating demonstration that historical criticism can enrich a literary reading of the text. He makes his point, but in the course of the argument, he unnecessarily undercuts himself by dismissing far too much previous literary critical scholarship in a way unprepared for in the body of his book. He dismisses too easily "older" historical critical views as though "newer" views were automatically superior, and his sketch of the present state of biblical scholarship does not take sufficient account of current representatives of older views. This kind of portrayal of current scholarship is tainted by the rather insidious implication that the newer views are the wave of the future, so one must hop on the bandwagon, or be disregarded. That is particularly unfortunate in this case, since many of the views he pushes are far from achieving any consensus, and it is not clear in every case that the "newer" views are any more capable of enriching a literary reading than the "older" views they have purportedly replaced.

Nonetheless, Damrosch's basic argument is sound, and his book deserves to be read and discussed widely as perhaps the best treatment of the relationship between historical critical study and the literary analysis of the biblical text. It is a stimulating work that was a joy to read and substantive enough to repay further study and reflection.

J.J.M. ROBERTS

Princeton Theological Seminary

Hanson, Paul D. *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986 (reprinted with corrections, 1988). Pp. 576. \$31.95 (paperback \$18.95).

Paul Hanson, the Bussey Professor of Divinity and of Old Testament at Harvard University, and the author of numerous seminal articles and of *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, *The Diversity of Scripture*, *Dynamic Transcendence*, and *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses*, is internationally known, and celebrated for his poetic vision and mastery of the theologies in the Hebrew scriptures or Old Testament. In the present work he focuses our attention on the call of God to his people and the origins and

development of their coming together. Wisely absent is the usual trite statement about the devolution of purity and community from David to Constantine; it is replaced by a sensitive search for obedience to God's call from the beginnings of biblical history to the present, and the ever present yearning for the future, decisive act by the Creator who calls, sustains, and promises.

The book moves from the pre-ninth-century-B.C. birth of Yahwistic notions of community, through the monarchy, exile, the period of restoration, the Palestinian Jesus movement, the earliest period of the church as reflected in the New Testament, to some contemporary implications. The community of God's chosen began in the primal response in the exodus (pp. 10ff.) of a band of former Egyptian slaves who responded to the call of the deliverer God who revealed that salvation was a call to fellowship with him (p. 69). The notion of community became seen as triadic: the emphasis fell upon righteousness, compassion, and worship (pp. 30ff.). Among the six appendixes are two that are extremely important in light of some recent dark moments: the stress on the necessity of the historical-critical method and the dynamics of the relationships of the two surviving communities (Jews and Christians; also pp. 383-86). My comments now will reflect only my own chosen areas of research; but at the outset let me stress that it is refreshing to read an Old Testament expert who knows and shows that all discussions of the theologies in the Old Testament are not self-contained but must constantly be interwoven with pertinent quotations and insights from other sources, especially the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Rabbinics.

Hanson's discussion of the origins of the Qumran community (which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls) is masterful, eschewing the positivistic methodology shown by some experts and avoiding the claim that the Righteous Teacher had been acting high priest. He stresses wisely the link of the Qumran community with the Hasmoneans, and with breathtaking skill reveals the relation among the Zadokites, who controlled the Temple until the Hasmonean takeover, the Levites, who were the Temple attendants and singers, and the Essenes, the group that was shaped by these, absorbed some of them, and moved to Qumran. That group is judiciously described as Essene, celibate, and apocalyptic (in contrast to much misdirected discussion). Hanson also shows that early Jewish religious phenomena must be described as groups with internal diversity and not as "sects."

His discussion of Jesus and his concept of community are strikingly similar to my own. Scholars have stressed Jesus' link with the Zealots, Essenes, and Pharisees; some have even claimed that he should be identified with one of these groups. Hanson shows that Jesus was not a Zealot; he did not lead a revolt against Rome. He was not an Essene; he rejected their strict legalism, hatred of outsiders, and concept of purity. He was not a Pharisee, rather stressing and developing eschatology and having a different attitude to Torah. In contrast to the tendency in many recent works to align Jesus with the Pharisees—and much of that discussion is solid—Hanson prefers to trace Jesus' inheritance back to much earlier traditions,

including Yahwism (p. 407). The discussion of Jesus' concept of community tends to stress the presence of God's rule; noteworthy, since Hanson is an authority on Jewish apocalypsoLOGY, is the following point: "God's reign of peace and justice was unfolding in their very midst. It is this aspect of his teaching more than any other that sets Jesus apart from the apocalyptic leaders of his time" (p. 398). Some critics may charge that Hanson veers precipitously close to the chasm of "realized eschatology," but he does recognize (but perhaps not adequately stress) the unfulfilled and expectant dimension of Jesus' central teaching: "It was precisely Jesus' urgent sense of the Kingdom's coming that led to his redefinition of community membership" (p. 402). It is good to see him point out that New Testament specialists do agree that Mark 1:14 does capture "the central theme in the preaching of Jesus" (p. 384).

To focus on the exodus as the beginning of the biblical notion of community is understandable, but fails to account for the paradigmatic nature of the Abrahamic traditions, and the penchant of the early Jews to trace the beginning of community, wisdom, and life back to Enoch, Noah, and Adam and Eve. These Jews, who referred to themselves as "Israelites" (as we know from the inscriptions and early Jewish literature), would disagree with the claim that "Israel itself identified as descriptive of its birthplace as a people of God, the exodus tradition" (p. 10). Granting that the exodus (whatever happened) is the heart of the Pentateuch does not allow one to state that it is the most ubiquitous theme in Hebrew scriptures; there is equal celebration of God as creator and the role of the patriarchs, especially when we read the Psalms, the Prophets, and the Wisdom traditions. Certainly Hanson is correct in seeing the exodus as paradigmatic for community; but the stress on Melchisedek in the Tanak, in Josephus, the Pseudepigrapha (viz., 2En), and the Dead Sea Scrolls (viz., 11QMel) shows that the cult, the heart of Israelite community, antedates the exodus. The Joseph traditions likewise trace community to the period prior to the exodus. The discussion of the three groups—Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes—leaves the Zealots, who challenged and threatened all concepts of community, as a phenomenon and social problem virtually undiscussed (see pp. 357, 382, 384, 390, 391). I doubt that the Hasmonean period "remains the darkest of all biblical periods" (p. 340). Considerable light is now thrown on this period, and to a certain extent some rays fall on the third century B.C. which is surely "the darkest period." Pontius Pilate was not a procurator (p. 382); he was a prefect (but, alas many leading historians of the first century A.D. continue to perpetuate this anachronism). Hanson rightly judges the Gospel of John to be, in ways, antignostic; but too many excellent scholars have concluded that the Gospel of Thomas is *not* gnostic to warrant the claim that it is "a genuinely gnostic writing" (p. 457; and without discussion or note). The Scripture index is incomplete, incorporating the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha but not noting the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hanson's control and frequent citations of 1QS, 1QH, and 1QpHab.

Hanson's depth of knowledge is matched by his breadth of reading. He astutely uses not only the Old and New Testaments but also the early Jewish writings and the rabbinic corpus (see, e.g., p. 331, n. 11). His use of contemporary thought, notably the works of T. S. Eliot, helps him bridge the centuries and allows us to see ways we may survive not only as humans but also as God's chosen ones during the present and foreseeable future, which Neusner calls "*the new catacomb*." This book is a major contribution to the search for the "unity of purpose" (p. 386) in the Bible. Hanson discerns beneath the diversity of biblical traditions and interpretations of traditions, and behind the fragmented groups, and the disparity and diversity that obviously have shaped the Bible a "common grounding in the one true God, whose purpose throughout time is one" (p. 386). To all ministers who feel disenfranchised by the secular realities not merely lashing at the walls of the Church but contaminating the air within, it is good once again to be reminded that the diverse groups within biblical history also experienced the "awesome moment of discovering that human resources are ultimately useless as regards deliverance and salvation" (p. 389). I fully agree with Hanson that the Bible is not "a manual of timeless answers"; it is scripture that opens us to the social realities around us, confronting us with "the God who invites a responding community to recognize the presence of God in the events it encounters, and to infer from that presence what is the just and loving way to live" (p. 488). From reality comes the vision: "the God in response to whom we are called into fellowship is living and active" (p. 468). Every minister should purchase this book, read it, live it, and meditate through the Spirit on how we can together respond to the Deliverer.

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH  
Princeton Theological Seminary

Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. *The Holy Land: An Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700*. 2d ed., illustrated. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. Pp. 432. \$9.95.

Living in Jerusalem in the late sixties and hearing guides tell preposterous stories to curious tourists and pilgrims I sought for a reliable, inexpensive, informative, and engagingly written work to put into the hands of visitors to the Holy Land. Since that time I have worked in Israel over a dozen times and have been astounded by the archaeological discoveries. In Jerusalem these have even challenged our reconstructions of ancient Palestine and the histories of Israel, Judaism, and Christianity, as well as the history of other cultures, including the Canaanites, Arabs, and Muslims. In the forefront of controlling the avalanche of challenging and revealing data are the distinguished Dominican Fathers of the prestigious *Ecole biblique de Jérusalem*. For many decades Père Pierre Benoit, a friend and priest to many Jerusalem Arab Christians who lived in and around the Old City, led tours to the actual sites; these were usually preceded by erudite lectures.



Now, since his death the mantle for this responsibility has fallen on Father Murphy-O'Connor who offers us a "new edition" of his 1980 book. The size has grown by more than sixty pages. The new edition is updated and many sections are expanded. The work is divided into two main sections: "The City of Jerusalem" and "The Land," reflecting both the central interest of visitors in the holy city and the unparalleled discoveries made in and around it. The table of contents arranges the discussions conveniently into the geographical and cultural divisions of the city itself. "The Land" is organized alphabetically so that the book can be quickly opened to the desired section.

High points are the insights that open up the probabilities that the site of Jesus' crucifixion is commemorated in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (pp. 43-53), the succinct account of one of the most revealing and palpable proofs of the horrifying burning of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 in "the Burnt House" (the reference to Josephus should be corrected to *War* 6. 404), the tantalizing brief account of the magnificence of Caesarea and especially its harbor built by Herod the Great (p. 183), and significantly, in contrast to the first edition, the much stronger endorsement of the possibility that Peter's house has been identified in Capernaum: "The most reasonable assumption is the one attested by the Byzantine pilgrims, namely, that it was the house of Peter in which Jesus may have lodged (Matt. 8:20)" (p. 191).

The book is already dated. The argument regarding the size of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus is inaccurate (p. 13). The Israeli archaeologists who argued that the "Third Wall" was much farther north of the present north wall have retracted their position. The stones north of the present north wall are from the defensive dike built by the Zealots in the sixties of the first century. The tower base is medieval, because of the type of foundations for the building. A full page must now be given to the treasures found in the Hinnom Valley at Ketef Hinnom to the west of the city walls, notably the recovery on two silver scrolls of the oldest portions of the Bible (dating from around 600 B.C.), the Aaronic Blessing said even today in synagogues and churches throughout the world (Nm. 6:24-26). Also from the First Temple is the ivory receptacle just recovered and obviously used in the Temple cult.

Father Murphy-O'Connor deserves our gratitude for his excellent guide. It is precisely what I would put into the hands of all who travel to Israel.

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH  
Princeton Theological Seminary

Brueggemann, Walter. *Israel's Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988. Pp. 208. \$9.95.

"Praise is the duty and delight, the ultimate vocation of the human community, indeed of all creation" (p. 1). With this echo of the Westminster Confession, Walter Brueggemann begins his exploration of the biblical literature of Israel's praise.



Brueggemann moves rapidly, however, from this traditional starting point to a new and fresh investigation of the significance of the praise of God. Brueggemann builds on the foundation of Sigmund Mowinckel who argued that the hymnic literature of praise in the Bible derived from actual use in the cult. The hymns of praise served to create a new and alternative "world" through the festival of the enthronement of Yahweh as king.

This firm grounding in the real social life of Israel and the proclamation of the good news of Yahweh's majestic and merciful kingship leads Brueggemann to a renewed emphasis on the power of the Psalms and other literature of praise in the Bible to construct new imaginative "worlds" where the false gods and idols are overthrown and Yahweh's kingship is reasserted. On the basis of recent work in sociology, psychology, and literary criticism, Brueggemann argues that the "world making" activity of praise has an effect beyond the holy sanctuaries where it may be sung. The praise of God may well have revolutionary social, political, and ethical effects.

But, argues Brueggemann, the praise of God must be properly sung. The doxological announcement of God's reign may be used simply to legitimate an oppressive earthly order. Brueggemann points to some psalms that tend toward an uncritical legitimization of the Jerusalem kingship as examples. "The alliance of temple and king, church and state, creed and flag, is a tempting business. And it is dangerous when translated in legitimating liturgies of praise. Liturgy becomes domesticated and praise of God becomes endorsement of the way the world is presently arranged" (p. 111).

The praise of God is properly used when it wells up "from below" out of the experience of Israel's national and personal suffering and the remembrance of God's transformation of that suffering. Only such doxology sung out of the experience or remembrance of suffering is authentic. Such praise sung in the matrix of pain tends to subvert any idolatry or ideology that identifies oppressive social structures with God's eternal will and reduces God to a powerless guarantor of the status quo.

One may wonder, however, at the way in which Brueggemann sometimes picks and chooses among the psalms of praise. Some are "bad" psalms of praise because they do not contain references to Yahweh's liberation of slaves in Egypt. Using words like "one can imagine," Brueggemann concludes that such psalms were intentionally constructed and used by the Jerusalem royal apparatus to legitimate itself and avoid any critique of its own oppression of the people. But Brueggemann's imagination and enthusiasm to read social and political intentions into Israel's literature of praise tend at times to lead him to miss other important literary or theological factors at work in the formation of the literature of praise.

For example, Brueggemann refers to Psalm 150 as a psalm that he imagines may have been intended to legitimate an oppressive monarchy because it provides no recollections of Yahweh's deliverance of Israelite slaves from Egypt or any other reasons to praise God. It is simply a summons to praise. But is not its *literary* place-

ment at the end of the book of Psalms a more plausible explanation of its form rather than an ancient *social* function of legitimating the Jerusalemite royal establishment by avoiding mention of the exodus? Psalm 150 functions as an unbridled and exuberant call to praise, a fitting literary and theological conclusion to a long book that recounts countless reasons for that praise.

The attraction of Brueggemann's work is that he reads the hymns of Israel's praise in a new and fresh way. He moves beyond our traditional ways of reading the Psalms so that the careful reader is rewarded with fresh avenues into the social implications of literature we typically confine to sanctuaries of worship. In his last chapter, Brueggemann skillfully applies the capacity of Israel's praise to be "world making" to the contemporary scene of North American Christians and congregations. The freshness of Brueggemann's work will give the reader much with which to wrestle.

DENNIS T. OLSON

Princeton Theological Seminary

Evans, Louis H., Jr. *Hebrews*. The Communicator's Commentary, vol. 10. Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985. Pp. 259. \$15.95.

This commentary has a rather quaint old-fashioned ring about it. In places it is reminiscent of B. F. Westcott's classic doctrinal study of 1899. The bibliography is dated. A voluminous literature has appeared on Hebrews since the works of Marcus Dods, James Moffatt, and W. Manson, magisterial as they have been.

One thing is certain about Hebrews. We do not know who wrote it. By contrast we learn a good deal about the life and personality of the present commentator, both from the general editor of the series, and from Evans himself, although he does apologize for introducing an autobiographical element in his introduction. The commentary is richly spiced throughout with illustrations from Evans's experience, personal reminiscences, and anecdotes: the building of the family dream house in the High Sierra (p. 90), an encounter with the marvelous strength and yet gentleness of Clydesdale horses on the farmland of his mother's folks in Arizona (p. 85), learning to fly and adventures as a pilot (pp. 86, 101, 151), love for his old typewriter (p. 163)—to name only a very few. Most of these illustrations are somewhat banal, and put the actual text of Hebrews out of focus (perhaps place the blame less on Evans than on the stated editorial aim to develop the preaching and teaching values in Hebrews). My impression is that he has poured into his exposition sermonic materials, gathered through many years of distinguished preaching ministry. The commentary often reads more like a testament of the writer's own individual evangelical faith (grounded in the Scriptures at large) than "objective" exegesis of the *specific* thoughts, words, and images of Hebrews.

At two crucial points Evans's work is worthy of high commendation. He demonstrates throughout with admirable clarity how Hebrews, unlike Paul, inter-

weaves parenesis or exhortation of his Jewish Christian readers with christological statements and descriptions, and how the former arises inevitably out of the latter (see, e.g., 1:1-14 followed by 2:1-3; 2:5-18 and 3:1-19 followed by 4:1-16). Second, he makes it quite plain that it is impossible to understand Hebrews without some acquaintance with the writer's extensive use of the midrashic mode of Jewish exegesis of scripture (see, e.g., his helpful treatment of the Melchizedek motif and how it has been worked out in Hebrews, pp. 112ff.). However, he scarcely does justice to another salient motif of Hebrews, Jesus Christ as the "trailblazer" who by his obedience even unto death on the cross moves on to his eternal priestly ministry, and continually beckons the wandering people of God toward the final sabbath rest.

Incidentally, it is surely very misleading to say that Moses was born and raised a Jew (*sic*), and the long and fanciful excursus on Moses' character (pp. 82ff., repeated almost verbatim on p. 206) has little or no foundation in the Old Testament (but see Acts 7:22), and is not germane to the meaning of the contrast Hebrews draws between Moses and Jesus (3:1-19).

Preachers, especially those who favor human-interest stories, will find here some grist to the homiletical mill. But they might do well to consult also such recent scholarly commentaries as those by R. Mcl. Wilson (New Century Bible, Eerdmans) and H. W. Attridge (Hermeneia Series, Fortress Press).

HUGH ANDERSON  
University of Edinburgh

Schnider, Franz, and Werner Stenger. *Studien zum Neutestamentlichen Briefformular*. New Testament Tools and Studies 11. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987. Pp. 191. \$79.50.

New Testament Tools and Studies is the brainchild of Princeton Seminary's Bruce M. Metzger. Since the publication of its initial volume in 1960 (*Index to Periodical Literature on the Apostle Paul*, compiled under the direction of Metzger), the series has borne the fruit of NT scholarship at its highest level. As its title indicates, the series comprises two kinds of scholarly contributions: "tools" useful for NT research (e.g., classified bibliographies of secondary literature on Jesus and the Gospels, Acts, and Paul) and technical "studies" of significant issues in NT research (in most cases philological, text-critical, or historical). Metzger himself has written or compiled half of the series' previous ten volumes.

The status of the series has now been enhanced by the appearance of the present volume, the first to be published in a foreign language. This is a first-rate investigation of a critical issue: the epistolary forms used by the authors of the NT. This kind of study is indispensable for interpreting the NT epistles, because it highlights what is otherwise too readily overlooked—viz., that the authors of the NT were not writing in a vacuum, but used literary conventions common in their (Greco-Roman) world. Most readers of the NT, of course, do not take these conventions

into account, even though they themselves use the conventions of *our* world and (unconsciously, perhaps) recognize them for what they are when reading the letters of others. (When I wrote my IRS agent and addressed him as "Dear Mr. Sanders," I was not making any claims of personal affection for the man; I was following a standard literary convention—a convention that may well perplex a reader two thousand years hence, should it no longer be in use!)

Most epistolary conventions are found at the beginning and end of a letter—the body of the letter will in most cases be unique. And so the bulk of this study discusses epistolary openings (Part 1) and closings (Part 2) of the NT epistles, with only a brief chapter evaluating literary conventions present in the bodies of these letters. For epistolary openings, the authors analyze conventions of (a) prescripts, in which a writer names himself, addresses his readers, and gives an initial greeting; (b) thanksgivings; and (c) self-commendations. This last convention is not a standard element of most Greco-Roman letters, but Schnider and Stenger argue that, starting with Paul, early Christian authors borrowed it from classical rhetoric (spoken, rather than written communication), and used it to justify themselves and their message in the face of competition from other Christian teachers with different Christian messages. This is one of the chief contributions the authors make to the current debate on epistolary forms, and will probably emerge as the most controversial of their positions.

For epistolary closings the authors discuss (a) concluding paraneses, in which a writer requests prayer, speaks of coming to see the addressees, and prays for their continued well-being, and (b) postscripts, in which the author greets the readers on behalf of others, asks them to greet particular people in return, and gives a final greeting or blessing.

This summary is much too brief to do justice either to the numerous variations found within each of these conventions or to their significance for understanding the NT epistles. For that, the reader must read the book! But suffice it to say that Schnider and Stenger have not only provided us with a thorough, detailed, and clear study of literary conventions (with numerous charts that conveniently summarize their findings), but have also drawn a number of stimulating exegetical conclusions from their close reading of the forms and syntax of these writings. Furthermore, at every point they have shown how the use and modifications of these literary conventions by early Christian writers illuminate the function of this literature in the communities they address. This kind of detailed study does not make for light reading, and, as always, there are numerous details of interpretation that can be called into question. Nonetheless, serious exegetical investigations of the NT epistles will have to take account of this book, and anyone interested in careful and insightful exegesis (anyone, that is, with a facility for German!) will benefit from having read it.

BART D. EHRLMAN

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



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